Clarion Review

Religion

A New Chronology for Old Testament Times: With Solutions to Many Hitherto Unsolved Problems through the Use of Rare Texts

Jan van Tuyl
AuthorHouse UK
978-1-4772-1942-3
Three Stars (out of Five)

Jan van Tuyl is not a professional biblical expert, but he is a dedicated, intelligent, and thorough scholar who has gone out of his way to include both secular and spiritual texts, well-known and rare treatises, and modern and ancient translations to examine the period of 5500 years that ran from the arrival of Adam in the Old Testament to the birth of Jesus in the Gospels. The advantage of reading *A New Chronology for Old Testament Times* is the viewpoint of a layperson who is part storyteller, gossip, iconoclast, and speculator, but nonetheless respectful and devout.

Van Tuyl includes details here that range from the quirky to the bizarre to the alarming. He understands the vast discrepancy that can lie between translation and colloquialism, when scribes sacrificed accuracy to propriety. He often illuminates passages that most might find puzzling. Remember when Ham found his daddy Noah, drunk, passed out, and naked in the tent? Then Noah sobered up and cursed Ham's progeny? Van Tuyl extrapolates possible interpretations for this incident (and numerous others) that are far more reasonable than what occurs on the face.

A New Chronology (when it pops) is an absorbing, amusing, historical narrative—relatively spiritual, but not above cracking the occasional joke. Van Tuyl raises questions that may mirror those of many curious readers. Did Moses really float down the Nile in a basket? Where did Adam and Eve get their clothes? How culpable was Pilate in Christ's crucifixion? How prevalent was inbreeding in the lives of the biblical patriarchs? Did Ezekiel ride in a spaceship? One must give van Tuyl credit: when he follows his better instincts, he can resuscitate biblical content that doesn't exactly leap off the page. Who knew angels might have procreated with humans?

As one might expect from the title, van Tuyl is obsessed with numeric details, such as Noah's age when his first son was born, how many years passed when God was creating the Earth, how old Sarah was when she conceived her notoriously improbable child. The down side to this obsession is that after a while, one doesn't necessarily care that five sources disagree on how old Abraham was when he had his Bar Mitzvah. For all his intuitive acumen, when it comes to jazzing up the details, van Tuyl sometimes either goes off on tangents or buries the lead. The author may believe that lacing the book with extensive factual debate validates his position, but the length of the volume (540 pages) makes these digressions and meanderings just that much harder to bear. Such detail is not egregious, but it can be wearisome.

A New Chronology for Old Testament Times is of great potential interest to anyone acquainted with the Bible who longs for elucidation and some juicy elaboration. Van Tuyl has gone to great lengths to make the content more accessible than many referential texts. For that, he is to be commended.

Christopher Soden