

\* Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, Vol. LXVIII, No 3, January, 1908.

Dr. A.T. Olmstead,  
University of Chicago,  
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Dr. Olmstead:

The Science News Letter recently made mention of your statements earlier in the year concerning the crucifixion date, and the age of Jesus. I would like to ask you one question: How can you set forth Friday, April 7, 30 A.D. as the crucifixion date, without accepting the principles of the modern Jewish calendar for the first century A.D.?

If you make the Jewish year 30-31 A.D. to be 385 days long, as you have to do with a 14 Nisan on April 7 -- for the place of the moon plainly shows that 14 Nisan is on April 27 in 31 A.D. -- if I say, you accept a 385-day year in the first century, then you also must accept the "postponements" of Jewish reckoning that cause such a year length.

But both Gentile and Jewish chronologers alike are decisive in concluding that the modern Rabbinical calendar cannot accurately identify early dates. Robert Schram allows it a "near approach" only to exactness ("Kalendariographische und Chronologische Tafeln," cf. paragraphs on "Jewish Calendar"). David Sidersky plainly declares that the ordinary short year of 353 days and the embolismic year of 385 days were issues of the system of postponements which "were inaugurated later by the Jewish doctors of Babylon, but which did not yet exist in the first century," cf. "Etude sur l'origine astronomique de la chronologie juive," p. 634. Article found in "Memoires presentes par divers savants a l'Academie des Inscriptions et belles-lettres de l'Institute de France." Vol. XII, part 2. Paris, 1913.

E.B. Knobel tried the modern Jewish reckoning on the papyrus texts found in Assuan, and he could not demonstrate the synthesis that characterizes the "double dates."\* I can give you other references, Doctor, but these are too important to be set aside.

I would like to add that the year 30 A.D. has a synchronism of its own relating to the period of Christ's ministry, but this comes in the year preceding the crucifixion, in the last six months of His life on earth. The outline given in John's gospel is very clear with regard to this.

I admire your courage, but I do not see how your conclusions can be correct. For three years I have been working on early Jewish calendation here in Washington, and for a longer time previously in Michigan. The Bible and related histories have many synchronisms, but these cannot be demonstrated by the modern Jewish computations.

I would greatly appreciate an answer to my criticism.  
Yours very sincerely,

July 15, 1941  
4 Crescent Place,  
Takoma Park, Md.

606 W. 122 St.,

N.Y. City,

July 29, 1941.

Miss Grace Amadon,

Takoma Park, Md.

My Dear Miss Amadon:

Your letter of inquiry was forwarded to me in New York, where I am teaching in the summer session at Columbia. The problem is too complicated to discuss in a letter, perhaps it will be enough to say that the dating is based on tables which Dr. Waldo Dubberstein and myself made quite a few years ago for the sole purpose of turning dates expressed in the Babylonian calendar into the Julian. Dr. Dubberstein and Dr. Richard Parker are publishing this fall with the Univ. of Chicago Press a small volume which presents these tables in fuller form, extending from 588 B.C. to 45 A.D. when the Babylonian calendar was changed by insertion of a month. In these tables, they have given the date of each month, first day, in the Julian era. Their results are based in large part on Bidersky, but corrected. Thanks to newly published tablets and also to unpublished tablets from our own excavations at Persepolis, we can now give the irregular nineteen year cycle back to 588 B.C. with absolute certainty. The exact date for the first day of each Babylonian month has been calculated from Schoch's ~~Shuch's~~ tables, given in Fotheringham's Venus Tablets of Ammisaduga.

While working on the life of Jesus, a popular form of which will be published by Scribners next spring, it struck me that the Jews ought still to be using the Babylonian calendar in the days of Jesus. I tested it out and it worked. Robert McDowell in his publication of the coins excavated at Seleucia on the Tigris had shown that the change of a month

in the intercalations was announced to the world by Parthian coins of 46 A.D. Just before I left Chicago, I saw that the use of the old calendar to 31 A.D. was witnessed by a new inscription just published from Dura-Europus. Also since my original publicity, I have found that my date of April 7, 30, for the crucifixion, is proved by the Easter Cycle, which calculated back to the beginning of the Christian era comes in 30 to April 9.

The publication of Drs. Parker and Dubberstein will also have an introduction giving all the data on historical events to be worked out from the Babylonian calendar, including that from the Jewish. Of course none of this is based on the modern Jewish calendar I have not yet had time to go into detail, but it looks as if this modern calendar goes back to the time when the Jewish calendar was divorced from the Babylonian, that is, just the time when the Babylonian was changed by the extra month.

Hoping that this will be enough until the new book of my former students comes out,

Yours Sincerely,

A. T. Christy

Return  
to  
Geo. McC. Price  
507 Texas St.  
Pomona, Calif.

# The University of Chicago

Department of Oriental Languages and  
Literatures

July 1, 1941

Professor George McCready Price  
507 Texas Street  
Pomona, California

My dear Professor Price:

Please pardon my long delay in replying to your letter of inquiry about my work on the New Testament. I have been working almost day and night to get off a manuscript of my little "Life of Jesus" to the publishers and I hope it will be published by Scribners in the autumn.

The letter from your friend is really quite remarkable in itself. I do not know where your correspondent can find the authority for the statement that the modern Jewish calendar was not in vogue in the first century A.D. It is true that there have been certain slight modifications made since the calendar was tied into the Jewish calendar we now use, but in the days of Jesus there cannot be the slightest doubt that the Jews used the Babylonian calendar from which they had borrowed the names of their months which during the exile took the place of the old Canaanite months of which we have several traces in the earlier parts of the Old Testament.

As it happens, certain members of the Oriental Institute staff have during the last few years paid very special attention to Chronology. You might be interested to know that in the autumn two of my former students, Dr. Richard Parker and Dr. Waldo Dubberstein, are bringing out a little book which will give tables running from 588 B.C. to 45 A.D. by which any day given in the Babylonian calendar which, of course, includes the Jewish, can be turned into dates of the Julian calendar with absolute certainty to the day. With this book in your friend's hands, I feel sure that he will realize that I have not made a fundamental mistake.

*My calendar  
runs from  
1503 B.C. to  
1844 A.D. and  
I have over  
50 synchro-  
nisms.*

Yours sincerely,

A. T. Olmstead

ATO:es

Mr. L. E. Froom's letter 4-21-41 enclosed



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