



The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria

Morris Jastrow Jr.

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Morris Jastrow Jr.'s *The Civilization of Babylon and Assyria* is a comprehensive study of the history of the Mesopotamian peoples that are often credited with establishing the first ancient civilizations. From the preface:

"To my knowledge this is the first time that the attempt has been made on a somewhat large scale to cover the entire subject of Babylonian-Assyrian civilization for English readers.

The aim of this work is to present a survey of the remarkable civilization which arose in the Euphrates Valley thousands of years ago and which, spreading northwards, continued to flourish till close to the threshold of the Christian era. As a result of the combined activities of explorers, decipherers and investigators of many lands during the past seventy years, we can follow the unfolding of the growth of the centres of settlement in the south which led ultimately to the formation of the Babylonian Empire, and of the offshoot of Babylonian civilization which resulted in the rise of a rival empire to the north, known as Assyria. While much still remains to be done before we can be said to have solved the problems—historical, linguistic, archaeological and ethnological—raised by the discoveries made beneath the mounds which concealed the remains of forgotten Babylonian and Assyrian cities for so many centuries, we have learned to know the customs and manners, the religion, the law, the commerce and art of both Babylon and Assyria quite intimately. We know how these peoples lived and how they died, the arrangement of their houses, palaces and temples, as well as of their tombs ; their daily life and their religious aspirations. The various occupations of the people are revealed in thousands upon thousands of clay documents, found in the mounds, which tell of business activities, of commercial intercourse, of legal disputes, of the growing complications of social life, and of judicial decisions affecting all classes of the population. The beliefs and practises prevailing in Babylon and Assyria are illustrated by abundant literary material, dating from the oldest period down to the fall of Babylon and beyond that into the era of Persian and Greek control. A considerable amount of literature in the stricter sense of the term has also come down to us on the clay tablets ; and finally monuments, the remains of temples and palaces, with wall sculptures, statues, votive offerings, cult objects and ornaments enable us to trace the course of art development along the centuries that span the existence of the Babylonian and Assyrian Empires."

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