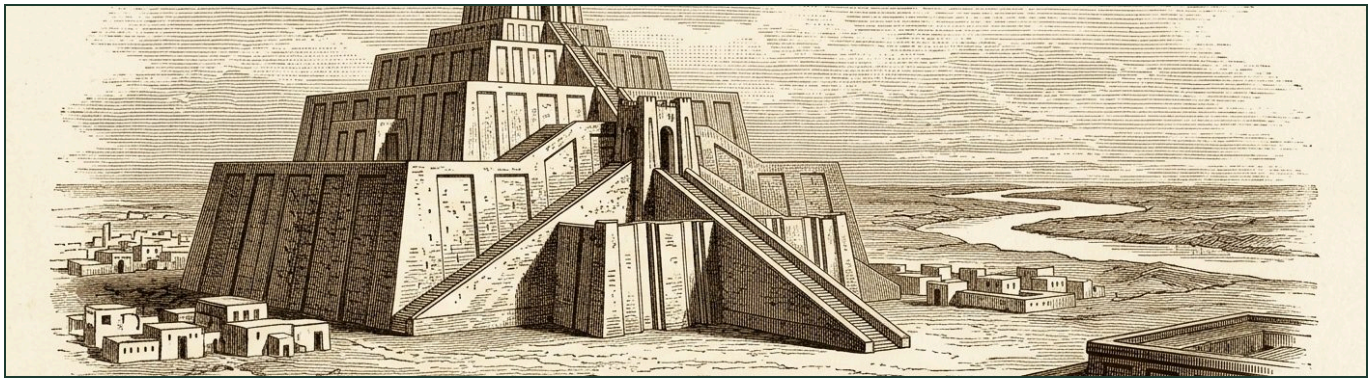


3500 BC – 539 BC

Ancient Mesopotamia Timeline

Ancient Mesopotamia – the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in present-day Iraq – is called the cradle of civilization, home to the world's first cities, first writing, and first law codes.

~3500 BC

The First Cities

Sumerian people build the world's first true cities — including Uruk, Ur, and Eridu — in the river valleys of southern Mesopotamia.

> **Why it mattered:** *Cities required organized government, specialized workers, and record-keeping — the foundations of civilization as we know it.*

~3200 BC

Writing Invented

Sumerian scribes develop cuneiform — pressing wedge-shaped marks into clay tablets — to keep track of temple goods and trade transactions.

> **Why it mattered:** *Writing was one of humanity's most transformative inventions — for the first time, knowledge, laws, and stories could be recorded and passed down across generations without relying on memory.*

~2330 BC

Sargon of Akkad

Sargon of Akkad conquers the Sumerian city-states and creates the world's first empire — the Akkadian Empire — ruling from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean.

> **Why it mattered:** *Sargon was the first empire-builder in recorded history, proving that a single ruler could unite and govern many different peoples across a vast territory.*

~2100 BC

Third Dynasty of Ur

The Sumerian city of Ur under King Ur-Nammu creates one of history's earliest law codes and builds a great temple tower called a ziggurat.

> **Why it mattered:** *Ur-Nammu's law code — predating Hammurabi's by 300 years — shows that early civilizations understood the need for written, public laws to govern complex societies fairly.*

Ancient Mesopotamia Timeline *continued*

~1792–1750 BC

Hammurabi's Code

Babylonian king Hammurabi creates one of history's most complete early law codes — 282 laws carved into a stone pillar covering wages, property, trade, and injury.

> **Why it mattered:** *Hammurabi's Code established that laws should be written down, publicly visible, and apply to everyone — a foundational idea for all later legal systems.*

~1600 BC

Hittites Sack Babylon

The Hittites from Anatolia (modern Turkey) sack the city of Babylon using fast war chariots, ending the Old Babylonian Kingdom.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Hittites showed the power of the horse-drawn war chariot, and in later centuries they became some of the first people to work iron.*

~900–600 BC

The Assyrian Empire

The Assyrians build the most powerful empire the ancient world had yet seen, stretching from Egypt to Persia, known for their terror tactics and sophisticated military.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Assyrian Empire's methods of warfare, mass deportation of conquered peoples, and administrative systems influenced how later empires were organized and governed.*

612 BC

Fall of Nineveh

A coalition of Babylonians and Medes destroys the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, ending the Assyrian Empire in a matter of weeks.

> **Why it mattered:** *The sudden, total collapse of the world's most powerful empire showed how quickly even the mightiest powers could fall — a lesson repeated throughout history.*

~605–562 BC

Nebuchadnezzar II's Babylon

Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II rebuilds Babylon into one of the ancient world's greatest cities, complete with massive walls, the Ishtar Gate, and legendary Hanging Gardens.

> **Why it mattered:** *Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was a marvel of the ancient world — its size, wealth, and beauty were unsurpassed, and its walls were considered impregnable.*

539 BC

Cyrus Conquers Babylon

Persian king Cyrus the Great captures Babylon without a major battle, incorporating Mesopotamia into the vast Persian Empire.

> **Why it mattered:** *Mesopotamian civilization — the cradle of the ancient world — had come to an end as an independent force. But its ideas about writing, law, astronomy, and literature had already spread across the world.*