

## 1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed

For more than three hundred years during the Late Bronze Age, from about 1500 BC to 1200 BC, the Mediterranean region played host to a complex international world in which Egyptians, Mycenaeans, Minoans, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Cypriots, and Canaanites all interacted, creating a cosmopolitan and globalized world-system such as has only rarely been seen before the current day. It may have been this very internationalism that contributed to the apocalyptic disaster that ended the Bronze Age. When the end came, as it did after centuries of cultural and technological evolution, the civilized and international world of the Mediterranean regions came to a dramatic halt in a vast area stretching from Greece and Italy in the west to Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia in the east. Large empires and small kingdoms, that had taken centuries to evolve, collapsed rapidly. With their end came the world's first recorded Dark Ages. It was not until centuries later that a new cultural renaissance emerged in Greece and the other affected areas, setting the stage for the evolution of Western society as we know it today. Blame for the end of the Late Bronze Age is usually laid squarely at the feet of the so-called Sea Peoples, known to us from the records of the Egyptian pharaohs Merneptah and Ramses III. However, as was the case with the fall of the Roman Empire, the end of the Bronze Age empires in this region was probably not the result of a single invasion, but rather of multiple causes. The Sea Peoples may well have been responsible for some of the destruction that occurred at the end of the Late Bronze Age, but it is much more likely that a concatenation of events, both human and natural — including earthquake storms, droughts, rebellions, and systems collapse — coalesced to create a “perfect storm” that brought the age to an end. In this illustrated lecture, based on his book of the same title (*1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed*; Princeton University Press, 2014) that was considered for a 2015 Pulitzer Prize, awarded the American School of Oriental Research's 2014 prize for “Best Popular Book on Archaeology,” and is being translated into 14 foreign languages, Professor Eric H. Cline of The George Washington University will explore why the Bronze Age came to an end and whether the collapse of those ancient civilizations might hold some warnings for our current society.

## Bio

Dr. Eric H. Cline is Professor of Classics and Anthropology, former Chair of the Department of Classical and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and current Director of the Capitol Archaeological Institute at The George Washington University, in Washington DC. He has degrees in Classical Archaeology, Near Eastern Archaeology, and Ancient History, from Dartmouth, Yale, and the University of Pennsylvania.

A Fulbright scholar, National Geographic Explorer, and NEH Public Scholar, Dr. Cline is an active field archaeologist. He has more than 30 seasons of excavation and survey experience in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Cyprus, Greece, Crete, and the United States. He is a former co-director at Megiddo (biblical Armageddon), where he dug from 1994 through 2014, and has co-directed the excavations at Tel Kabri in Israel since 2005.

Dr. Cline has authored, co-authored, or edited a total of 17 books. His most recent is *Three Stones Make a Wall: The Story of Archaeology*, published in March 2017. In addition, he has also authored or co-authored nearly 100 academic articles, which have been published in peer-reviewed journals, festschriften, and conference volumes.