



DIGGING UP THE PAST

Louis Rushmore

Digging Up the Past

By Louis Rushmore

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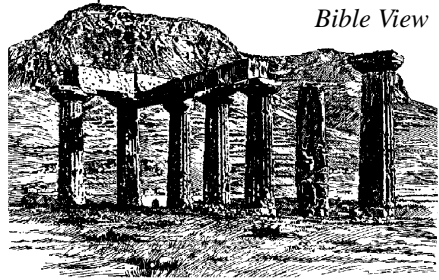
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Chapter 1: Digging Up the Past

Archaeology is a science that sifts evidence of mankind's past to discern historical information. A dictionary definition for "archaeology" is "the scientific study of material remains (as fossil relics, artifacts, and monuments) of past human life and activities" (*Merriam*). A simplified, homespun definition of "archaeology" could be "digging up the past." Bible archaeology is archaeological excavation, examination and ascertaining information about biblical characters, biblical places or biblical times.



Since archaeology is a science, it is vulnerable to a degree of subjective assessment (i.e., educated guesses). Unfortunately, in every sphere of life, unintended biases as well as covert (or sometimes thinly veiled) prejudices influence conclusions to which one arrives regarding the *available evidence*. For instance, once biblical archaeologists were usually friends of the Bible and delighted whenever they found extra-biblical, archaeological evidence that validated the biblical text. Now, so-called *new* biblical archaeologists are pronounced enemies of the Bible and are horrified whenever extra-biblical, archaeological evidence is interpreted by anyone to validate the biblical text. New Bible Archaeology has boldly undertaken the reevaluation of past discoveries and revels in issuing new assessments of past archaeological discoveries that contradict earlier, published conclusions. Biblical archaeologists who characteristically diminish any possible relationship between archaeological discoveries and the Bible are called minimalists; biblical archaeologists who characteristically capitalize on any possible relationship between archaeological discoveries and the Bible are called maximalists.

Available evidence implies that what has been unearthed and

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examined may not represent all of the potential evidence that either has not been found yet, or if discovered, to date has not been examined. Literally, tons of excavated, but unevaluated antiquities, lie in the basements of museums around the world; some discoveries of which the world is routinely apprised are literally *discovered* in museum basements years after their deposit there. This is because the volume of archaeological finds exceeds the time, money and expertise needed to carefully appraise them.

Nevertheless, biblical archaeology in reality is a tremendous friend of the Bible believer. Repeatedly, biblical archaeology when subjected to an honest, balanced treatment (neither minimalist or maximalist oriented) serves as extra-biblical validation of the biblical text and bolsters the Christian faith. A case in point concerns the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the malefactors crucified on either side of our Lord (Matt. 27:38). Though crucifixion dots the annals of secular history from times most ancient, archaeological evidence validating that mode of execution has been unavailable to corroborate either secular or biblical history respecting crucifixion.

However, “[f]ollowing the Six Days War in 1967, excavation of tombs around Jerusalem yielded several ossuaries (stone bone boxes)” (Rushmore 201). This manner of Jewish burial that prevailed only for a 200-year period (Humble, *Archaeology* 67-68) yielded a singular discovery that provided archaeological confirmation of both the secular, historical record and the biblical record respecting execution by crucifixion.

And in one ossuary were found the bones of a Jew who was named Yehohanan [John], and both his ankles were pierced by an iron nail of 15 centimeters long. And after examination of the bones, it was found this poor person was crucified, and for the first time we have a real archaeological evidence showing how people were crucified. But from the time of Jesus, we had no archaeological evidence... (Humble, *Archaeology* 61)

Wood rots and iron oxidizes (rusts). Consequently, wooden

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crosses or poles on which unfortunate persons were crucified have not survived to the present. Likewise, iron nails by which some persons were affixed to crosses have not before been known to survive to the present. The unique circumstance of a crucified person being entombed in an ossuary and that the iron nail lodged in his bones yielded a remarkable find that *illustrates* the value of biblical archaeology.

In the case of crucifixion, the abundance of secular, historical records verifying execution by crucifixion as well as the biblical record evidencing the same needed no archaeological confirmation to establish historically crucifixion as a form of execution. However, regarding other biblical entries, either no historical records coincide with the biblical record (absence of historical information) or secular history actually conflicts with biblical data. In such cases, biblical archaeology is invaluable toward the unbeliever to assure him of the Bible's truthfulness. Further, extra-biblical, archaeological confirmation of Bible facts bolsters and enhances the Bible-believers faith. Archaeological discoveries that pertain to biblical characters, biblical places or biblical times, fairly and honestly evaluated, always befriend the biblical account as well as under gird the faith of believers.

Recommended Reading

Matt. 27:35-38

Questions

1. Give a homespun definition of "archaeology."
2. Bible archaeology is about what three things?
3. True or False. Archaeology, like other sciences, is vulnerable to a degree to subjective assessment.
4. What do the words "available evidence" respecting scientific inquiry imply?
5. True or False. So-called new biblical archaeologists are enemies

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of the Bible.

6. True or False. Many contemporary archaeological discoveries are unearthed from museum basements rather than from the dirt in some long-forgotten locale.
7. True or False. Biblical archaeology is really a tremendous friend of the Bible believer.
8. Since about 1967, what three records or kinds of evidence confirm that crucifixion was a form of execution in the first century?

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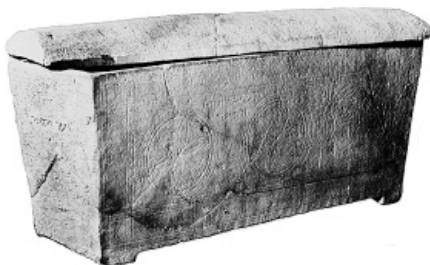
Anciently, the Jews buried their dead in a number of ways in Palestine. Nomads, such as the Patriarchs, sometimes buried their dead along their route of travel (Gen. 35:19-20). Otherwise, natural caves or rock-carved tombs were often used as family burial sites (Gen. 23:1-20), especially by the wealthy.

These rock tombs were used to bury several family members (Gen. 49:33—50:13). This custom of burying the dead was practiced in the time of Christ (Matt. 27:58-60). The poor were buried in shallow graves, the marking of which did not stand through time (Luke 11:44) or in a potter's field (Matt. 27:1-10). "The poorest Jerusalemites, who could not afford family cave-tombs, were buried in fields, about a foot below the surface" (Zissu 52). Another type of internment less often used and usually attributed to the ascetic sect of the Essenes was the shaft grave. These shafts were from four to six feet deep, unadorned, anonymous, boasting little to no items associated with the deceased and contained a single body (with rare exception).

Ossuaries or bone boxes, briefly introduced already, were employed in burial caves or rock-hewn tombs. The use of ossuaries predated and postdated the time of Jesus Christ: "The archaeological evidence from Jerusalem dates the use of ossuaries from c. 30 BC to AD 135" (Douglas). Bill Humble states, "Ossuaries were used for about a century, from the reign of Herod the Great (37 B.C.) until the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and on rare occasions in the early second century. Thus, when archaeologists discover a tomb with ossuaries, they know it is about 2,000 years old" ("Soul-Stirring" 36).

An ossuary is a "bone box," usually about two feet long and

Christian Iconography of the
Pennsylvania Dutch



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made of limestone or marble, which was used in a distinctive Jewish burial custom. After a body had been in a tomb long enough for the flesh to decay and disappear, the bones would be collected and given a permanent burial in the same tomb in an ossuary. This allowed the tomb to be used generation after generation. The custom of secondary burial began during the time of Herod the Great and continued for about 200 years. (Humble, *Archaeology* 67-68)

Several ossuaries (of the many hundreds recovered) provide valuable, extra-biblical information that corroborates the biblical text, as well as sometimes expands biblical knowledge with previously unknown details. For instance, a depiction of Herod's Temple is inscribed on a limestone ossuary. "The ossuary with the depiction of the Temple is typical. It is a little over 2 feet long, 1 foot wide, and slightly more than 1 foot high... This ossuary, like a number of others, rests on four simple pedestals. Its barrel-vaulted lid is also common, as are both flat and peaked lids" (Grossberg 47). This picture inscribed in stone corresponds to descriptions of the Temple provided by Josephus.

One of the most thought-provoking ossuaries discovered is the one belonging to the high priest who condemned Jesus Christ and persecuted the early church (Matt. 26:3-4, 57-66; Acts 4:6). Interestingly, the physical remains of Caiaphas who caused Jesus Christ to be crucified by the Romans are yet with us, but the resurrected Christ Ascended back to heaven. Caiaphas' ossuary, on which his name appears twice, is among the most ornate of bone boxes. There is a shrieking irony between the bone-filled ossuary of Caiaphas and the empty tomb of Jesus Christ (Feldman and Roth 37)!

Caiaphas "reigned from A.D. 18 to 36." The occasion of the discovery of his ossuary "is the only time the actual physical remains of a biblical person have been found. The bones of Caiaphas...were reburied on the Mount of Olives" (Humble, "Soul-Stirring" 37).

One of the most controversial archaeological artifacts is an ossuary attributed to "James the son of Joseph, the brother of Jesus";

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this particular bone box is 20 inches long (at the bottom but 22 inches long at the top), 10 inches wide and 12 inches high (Lemaire, “Burial” 27-28). The primary reason that anyone views this ossuary and many other artifacts with critical suspicion is that they are unprovenanced. That simply means that mystery surrounds their origin, because they were not properly documented as recovered in strata (where they lay in the earth and associated with surrounding objects).

The historical appearance of artifacts that may have been unearthed illegally and without scientific oversight for sale on the antiquities market must be questioned, primarily because such an artifact must be discerned from possible forgeries. Second, there is a great reluctance among archaeologists and the organizations or governments with which they are associated to approve unprovenanced artifacts, even if genuine, for fear of encouraging more, future illegal disturbance of archaeological artifacts for sale on the antiquities market. Third, ideological, religious and political biases motivate various persons, organizations and governments to brand as forgeries, when they can, archaeological artifacts that may invalidate their belief systems or politics. These ardent critics are panic-stricken because: “The inscription provides the earliest attestation of three key New Testament figures and the first-ever reference to Jesus in the archaeological record” (Shanks, “Cracks” 21).

Does the fact that the inscription on this ossuary mentions not only the father of the person whose bones are enclosed but also the brother help us in our identification? It is common to mention the father in this context, but mention of the brother is very unusual, although it does happen (we have only one other example in Aramaic, in a similar formula). The mention of the brother probably means that the brother had a particular role, either in taking responsibility for the burial, or more generally because the brother was known, and the deceased had a special connection with him. When we take into account that this “James/Jacob, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” had a brother who was by this time well

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known and that the “James/Jacob, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” had a special relationship with this brother as the leader of the Jerusalem church, it seems very probable that this is the ossuary of the James in the New Testament. If so, this would also mean that we have here the first epigraphic mention—from about 63 C.E.—of Jesus of Nazareth. (Lemaire, “Burial” 33)

Before the James ossuary came to light, the earliest mention of Jesus was in the Rylands Papyrus—the earliest known Gospel fragment. Dating to 125 C.E.—about 100 years after Jesus’ death—measuring only 3.4 inches high, the fragment bears the Greek text of John 18:31-33 and 18:37-38. (Feldman and Roth 34)

The James Ossuary suffers the three-fold complaint of (1) being unprovenanced, (2) if authenticated, promoting future illegal disruption of archaeological beds, and (3) agitating ideological, religious and political biases. However, in the next place, an unprovenanced artifact may be a forgery, but a legitimate and supervised archaeological site can be *salted* with forgeries as well. Hence, irrespective of the origin of an artifact, it must be examined carefully and as honestly as possible to validate it as authentic.

The popular press, liberal news organizations and the Israeli government dismiss the James Ossuary as a forgery. The Christian’s faith is not the least damaged if the James Ossuary is not authentic—a fake. However, if the James Ossuary is genuine, it merely provides extra-biblical confirmation of the biblical text (and secular history) respecting the *historical Jesus*. The James Ossuary and every other potential archaeological artifact deserve a fair, unbiased analysis. Following is some of the evidence for the authenticity of the James Ossuary.

(1) World-renown paleographer (student of ancient writings and inscriptions) Andre Lemaire, as well as other paleographers, deemed the inscription to be authentic. (2) State of Israel Ministry of National Infrastructures Geological Survey concluded the inscription is

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authentic (Lemaire “Burial” 28-29). (3) The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada studied the inscription, likewise concluding that it is authentic. (4) Professor Roni Reich of the Israeli Antiquities Authority’s (IAA) “Ossuary Inscription Committee” deemed the James Ossuary inscription as authentic, until capitulating on his assessment to concur with findings of the “Materials Committee.” (5) “Strangely enough, the subcommittee on the ossuary inscription did not include any paleographer or epigrapher [a student of engraved inscriptions]” (Lemaire, “Flawed” 51). (6) Jacques Neguer of the IAA’s “Materials Committee” asserted that the ossuary is authentic but that the inscription (not his field) was a forgery (“Storm” 26-31; “Paleography” 37-38). (7) It is commonly acknowledged by all parties that the ossuary (and particularly its inscription) was cleaned in modern times with contemporary solvents that disturbed the patina (ages old film that develops on antiquities), making examination of the patina inconclusive rather than evidence of forgery (“Observations” 32-33). (8) The IAA did not realize the potential significance of the James Ossuary, because it did not realize that the inscription might refer to Jesus of Nazareth, when the IAA granted an export permit for the ossuary to be displayed in Canada. Only after the James Ossuary was published regarding its inscription did the IAA have any interest in or complaint about the James Ossuary (Shanks, “Cracks” 21-22).

“All agree that the ossuary itself is authentic and dates to the time of Jesus” (“Alleged” 61). The only question regarding the authenticity of the James Ossuary is whether the inscription is authentic or a forgery. Despite critics who decry the inscription as a forgery, numerous scholars and scholarly organizations, many of which are secular rather than potentially biased by ideologies, religion and politics, firmly assert that the James Ossuary inscription is genuine. I conclude by my preponderance of the published arguments respecting the James Ossuary that there is no reason to doubt its authenticity, and there is more reason to consider it simply one more of numerous extra-biblical, archaeological witnesses to

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the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. Incidentally, both the secular historical record and the biblical text concur respecting the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth.

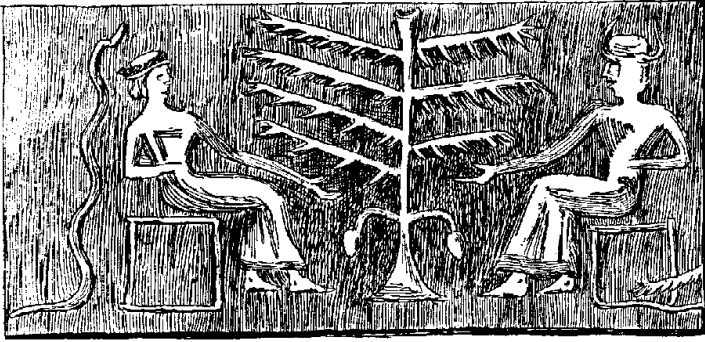
Recommended Reading

Gen. 49:33-50:13

Questions

1. List three types of graves used in Palestine anciently by the Jews.
2. Define and describe an ossuary.
3. Describe the pictorial depiction of Herod's Temple that was mentioned in this chapter.
4. Who was the Bible character in this chapter who condemned Jesus and persecuted the early church?
5. What is an unprovenanced artifact?
6. What is unusual about the inscription on the James Ossuary?
7. Does the authenticity or lack of authenticity of the James Ossuary affect the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth? Explain.

Chapter 3: Almost as Old as Dirt



Bible View

James Usher (1580-1656) “fixed the Biblical chronology” (*McClintock and Strong*), dating creation at 4004 B.C. by analyzing the Hebrew Old Testament. He crafted his biblical chronology by assuming an “unbroken succession of father-son relationship in the genealogical lists of Gen 5 and 11” (*New Unger’s*). Another chronologist, Hales, who used the Septuagint to derive a biblical chronology, dated creation at 5411 B.C. Usher’s biblical chronology appeared in the margin of the Authorized Version (KJV); he also dated Noah’s flood at 2348 B.C. (Easton). However, some say it is not possible to ascertain with certainty when creation occurred because one cannot be absolutely sure that Genesis’ genealogical lists do not omit any names of lesser importance. Yet, any conservative analysis of Bible information concurs with a relatively young earth, scientifically provable (but that is another study) to be not more than 10,000 years old (rather than the fanciful millions or billions of years old per the *theory* of evolution).

One of the most well known biblical accounts in Genesis following creation is the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. Genesis Three portrays Adam and Eve in the Garden when Satan in the form of a snake tempts Eve to eat fruit off a tree from which God had forbidden the first pair even to touch. Remarkably, a pair

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of archaeological discoveries in the very part of the world where the Garden of Eden was located date back nearly to and depict the biblical account of the fall of man. By Usher's calculations, the earth is about 6,000 years old whereas these artifacts are about 5,500 years old. Hence, these artifacts are *almost as old as dirt* (i.e., just a little younger than the created earth itself).

Two Temptation Seals dating before 3,000 B.C. were discovered in excavations at and near Nineveh. Both picture a man, a woman and a serpent. One of them also shows a tree, the woman picking the fruit from the tree and a serpent that is standing erect. Early man appears to have acknowledged from antiquity the story of the temptation in the Garden of Eden. Archaeological discoveries once again bolster a biblical narrative. (Rushmore 80)

Actually, the first of these two seals is known as the Temptation Seal. "According to some archaeologists, the oldest piece of art known to the human family is that which is recognized as the temptation seal that pictures a tree on the opposite sides of which are seated two persons" ("Beginnings"). "[O]n the left, a woman [is] plucking fruit; behind the woman, a serpent, [is] standing erect, as if whispering to her" (Halley 68). "This ancient piece of art is recognized by scholars as a pictorial representation of the account found in Genesis 3 and is corroborative evidence proving the historicity of the Biblical narrative" ("Beginnings"). "Some of the most startling archaeological finds bear upon the historicity of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, a portion of the Bible that even some Bible-believing scholars have had difficulty accepting at face value. Among these is the Temptation Seal, found among ancient Babylonian [clay] tablets, and presently in the British Museum..." (Riss).

The second seal is known as the Adam and Eve Seal. This seal depicts "a naked man and a naked woman, walking as if utterly down-cast and broken-hearted, followed by a serpent. The seal is about an inch in diameter, engraved on stone. It is now in the University Museum at Philadelphia" (Halley 68). This artifact dating

to about 3,500 B.C. shows the first human pair bowed forward while walking, much like more contemporary artists' conceptions of God driving Adam and Eve from the Garden.

Scholars from the time of the discovery of these seals through the present have recognized the significance of them as they relate to the biblical account of the fall of man. However, especially in recent years with the rise of so-called new biblical archaeology, critics of the Bible (and God behind the Bible) have capitalized on the subjectivity of interpretation to discount these seals as having any relationship whatsoever to the biblical account. Rather, critics assert that any resemblance to the biblical narrative is coincidental, and that the Temptation Seal, for instance, really depicts "a sacred marriage icon" ("Sacred"). However, a host of scholars, some of whom with which we are acquainted personally, continue to confidently avow the biblical application of these and other archaeological discoveries. The following observations deserve honest consideration:

Some writers have doubted that there is any real significance to these seals as evidence for the fall. However, the specific personages and elements cannot easily be dismissed in such fashion. For what reason should an artist select such a motif by which testimony is made as to the cause of man's degradation? Rather, one should select a theme that would enhance man's image. (qtd. in Jackson).

It is difficult to explain what the three figures, engraved on a seal dating from the beginnings of human antiquity, are doing if the artifact is not another depiction of the Genesis account. ("Adam")

The Babylonian Flood Tablets also serve as extra-biblical corroboration of the biblical record. Excavation of Nineveh in the 1850's unearthed clay Flood Tablets that correspond to the biblical account of the universal flood of Noah's day. A Sumerian version of the flood also was found at Nippur among tens of thousands of clay tablets (between 1880-1900) (Free and Vos 194). "The Bible tells of

it; the ancient Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh tells of it: a terrible deluge left the whole earth under water” (“Evidence”). There are numerous similarities between the universal flood of Noah’s day and the extra-biblical, ancient accounts that have surfaced through archaeology. The chief difference between the biblical narrative and the extra-biblical accounts of the universal flood pertains to the polytheism connected with the extra-biblical accounts versus the monotheism of the biblical account.

The same collection of tablets also recount the biblical account of the destruction of the Tower of Babel and the confusion by God of the languages. The Flood Tablets provide human commentary on the events surrounding the Tower of Babel. The tablets read, in part: “The building of this temple offended the gods. In a night they threw down what had been built. They scattered them abroad, and made strange their speech” (Free and Vos 41). Both biblical and secular history ascribe language to mankind from the beginning and that all humanity initially shared a common language. Some have observed that most languages demonstrate their origin from a single parent language.

So, biblical archaeology provides extra-biblical corroboration of the universal flood and the Tower of Babel also, neither of which events themselves removed overly much from when dirt was created (i.e., *almost as old as dirt*). Observations so far represent merely a sample of the vast amount of extra-biblical evidence available today through *digging up the past* or biblical archaeology.

Recommended Reading

Gen. 3:1-24; 6-8; 11:1-9

Questions

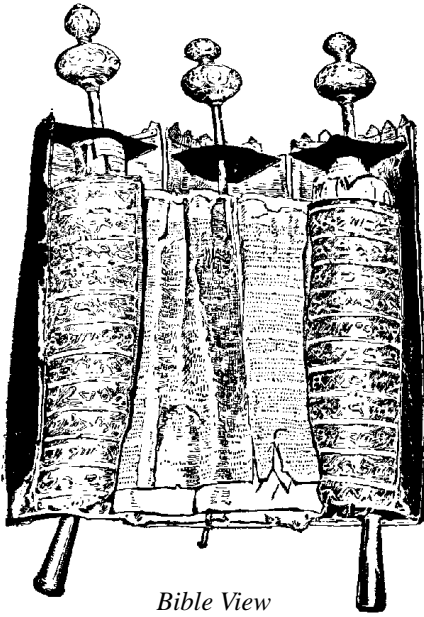
1. As far as one can ascertain from biblical chronologies and true science, planet earth is relatively young and not more than how many years old?
2. The _____ Seal, from about 5,500 B.C., and

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the _____ Seal, from about 3,500 B.C., both provide evidence in addition to the Bible of events surrounding the Garden of Eden in Genesis Three.

3. The _____ Tablets correspond to the biblical account of the universal _____ in Noah's day.
4. The same discovery respecting the previous question also provides extra-biblical confirmation of what two other biblical events in Genesis?
5. All modern languages evidence that they ultimately originate from a _____ or from a single _____.
6. How close to the beginning or creation do some archaeological finds transport modern man when he discovers and evaluates them? List several archaeological discoveries that consequently are nearly as old as dirt.

Chapter 4: Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls



Bible View

Qumran consists of the ruins of a desert community on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. It lies just a few miles southeast of Jerusalem and south of Jericho. Caves adjacent to Qumran yielded a library of about 800 books,

including biblical texts, non-biblical but religious texts and secular texts. Bedouin shepherd boys accidentally found the since famous Dead Sea Scrolls while searching for lost sheep. This 1947 discovery eventually drew an extensive excavation of the cave in which the original find was located as well as neighboring caves.

Inside, the caves were not clean and neat and level. On the contrary, they were often very difficult to excavate in. In Cave 4 there were 6 feet of bat dung and dust deposited over 2,000 years that the Bedouin and the archaeologists had to wade through in the stifling heat in order to try to extricate the fragments. ...A few of the scrolls, about ten or so, were beautifully preserved and largely intact, like the scrolls of the Book of Isaiah. But most consist of a lot of tiny fragments. (Shanks, et al. 4)

Arguably, the most significant contribution of biblical archaeology in the twentieth century, both in importance and sheer number of pieces, must be the accidental discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the nearby settlement of

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Qumran still present some mysteries that no theory adequately and completely addresses. Unanimity as to who lived at Qumran, who put the scrolls in the caves, why the scrolls were placed in the caves and who wrote the scrolls continues to be elusive.

Every scholar recognizes that not all the scrolls were written at Qumran. Many of the scrolls even pre-date the settlement at Qumran. All scholars also recognize that many of the other scrolls are not Essene documents—for example, the more than 200 Biblical scrolls. (Shanks, “Who Wrote” 12)

In 1947, an ancient manuscript of the Book of Isaiah was found that predated the previously oldest copy of that book by 1,000 years. The fidelity in translating between the copies that many years apart warrants great confidence in the reliability of the current text of Isaiah and the Bible in general.

...a date of about 100 B.C. Such an early manuscript of Isaiah is of great significance, inasmuch as the oldest manuscript up to that time dated from about 900 A.D. Even more important was the close agreement between this newly found Jerusalem manuscript and the traditional Hebrew text, which was copied much later. ...there is nothing in this manuscript that can be called “a major addition or omission” ...The substantial agreement between this ancient manuscript and those of a thousand years later shows the care with which biblical manuscripts were copied and adds to our assurance concerning the substantial accuracy of the later manuscripts from which our English translations were made. (Free and Vos 176)

It has every chapter and every verse that we have in our Bibles. Except for a few very minor variations, the Hebrew text is identical with the Massoretic text that was used for all our English translations of the Bible. (Humble, *Archaeology* 40)

This manuscript of Isaiah enjoys a singular distinction: “...2,000-year old manuscript—the oldest manuscript of a complete book of the Bible ever discovered (35).” The claims, then, that *new*

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discoveries somehow invalidated English translations of the Bible made before 1947 are baseless. This attempt to justify a myriad of new translations not only unnecessarily undermines confidence in the revealed will of God, but the numerous English translations themselves that have appeared shortly after each other in the twentieth century also undercut confidence in the Word of God. Especially, doctrinal differences that appear in the modern translations must be attributable to something other than *new discoveries*!

The Book of Isaiah cited above and later discoveries from a total of 11 caves near Qumran resulted in the discovery of a number of additional scrolls, together called the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls are comprised of both biblical and secular documents.

...Cave 1 at Qumran. These include a complete scroll of Isaiah, a partial Isaiah, the Habakkuk Commentary (including two chapters of Habakkuk), the Manual of Discipline (rules for members of the religious community who lived nearby), Thanksgiving Hymns, a Genesis Apocryphon (apocryphal accounts of some of the patriarchs), and Wars of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness (an account of a real or spiritual war between some of the Hebrew tribes and the tribes east of the Jordan, Ammonites, Moabites, etc.). (Free and Vos 176)

Overall, tens of thousands of manuscript fragments of hundreds of scrolls were found in the 11 caves. Of the biblical manuscripts, only the Book of Esther has not been found.

One curious manuscript is on a copper scroll.

This scroll consists of two rolls of copper found in cave 3. Written in Hebrew, it contains a list of hiding-places in Palestine containing fabulous treasures, with instructions for reaching them. Whether these were real treasures of the Temple or the sect or purely imaginary is still a matter of dispute. In any case, attempts to locate some of the treasures listed have ended in complete failure. (*Archaeological Encyclopedia*)

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More recently, other efforts to follow this so-called *treasure map* have met with limited, though, somewhat anticlimactic success. Perhaps an unlikely source, *Popular Mechanics* featured the copper scroll in its May 1999 issue. Further, the magazine sponsored an effort, which included its Science Editor and a *Popular Mechanics* Land Rover, to search for some of the 60 to 64 treasures. The adventurers found none on that outing. Purportedly, though, Vendyl Jones, a Baptist preacher from Texas, found two items described on the copper scrolls.

In 1988, Jones and his team hit pay dirt. They found one of the artifacts listed in the text, a small jug of ancient anointing oil. Four years later, in 1992, Jones and his team made a second discovery, a red organic material that the Weizman Institute, the Israel Institute of Geology and Bar-Ilan University would all identify as containing eight of the 11 spices used in making ancient incense. (Fillon 73-74)

The theory is that during an interim in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Jews hid temple treasures outside the city, and that the copper scrolls show where it was hidden.

Jerusalem, “the City of Peace,” has been besieged about 40 times and destroyed—at least partially—on 32 occasions. The battle that most interests us was waged here nearly 2000 years ago. In 70 C.E. (Common Era), after four years of war, a meeting was arranged between the Roman commander Titus and leaders of the Jewish community. They offered to abandon the city and live in the desert. Titus refused and the battle raged for another month. It was during this time that the treasures alluded to in the copper scroll—which eluded us on our trek into the desert—were supposedly spirited to the caves in the Judean Hills. Legends say some were hidden en route. (134)

The color photographs of the Bible lands and of the copper scroll in *Popular Science* are exquisite. The translation of the map is awe-inspiring:

In Mount Gerizim, under the entrance of the upper pit: one

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chest and ...60 talents of silver ...In the vat of the olive press, in its western side, a plug stone of 2 cubits: 300 talents of gold. ...Under the Monument of Absalom, on the western side, buried at 12 cubits: 80 talents. ...towards the overflow tank: 80 talents of gold in two pitchers. ...under the wall on the east, in a spur of rock: 600 pitchers of silver... (72-73).

Some of the landmarks are either not discernible or are simply not there any more. Doubtless, many treasures have been found purposely or accidentally over 2,000 years. Other sites are not accessible.

The ruins of Qumran are usually attributed to the Essenes. However, even among on-site students of Qumran, there is hardly a consensus regarding any number of matters, including: who occupied Qumran and when as well as who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls and stored them in the adjacent caves. “Among scholars, it would be easier to get agreement on the size, color, location, and deer-power of Santa’s sleigh than to reach consensus on issues relating to the Essenes and the Qumran community” (Weiss)

Excavation of the site yielded inkpots, tables and benches in what excavators call the scriptorium.

We know from the Manual of Discipline, one of the manuscripts found in Cave 1, that the Essenes worked in shifts 24 hours a day in this library, or scriptorium, writing commentaries and copying precious manuscripts of the Bible. (Humble, *Archaeology* 38)

Several additional buildings and large cisterns also comprise the ruins of Qumran. “[I]n July and August it gets to 135 to 140 here” (39)

Qumran was destroyed by the Romans along with other Jewish cities, including Jerusalem, following the Jewish revolt in A.D. 66. The Essenes may have hidden the scrolls in the nearby caves to protect them from the impending approach of Roman armies.

Several of the scrolls are displayed in the Shrine of the Book museum in Jerusalem. The building looks like the lid of a pottery jar in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were stored in the caves at Qumran. In addition to scrolls containing biblical text, secular scrolls, including

Chapter 4: Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls

papyri letters, are kept in the Shrine of the Book. A letter by Bar Kochba, involved in an uprising against Rome (A.D. 132), advises ill treatment of Jewish Christians.

In this letter Bar Kochba orders one of his generals to put the Galileans in fetters. The “Galileans” were the Jewish Christians, and this is the first tangible evidence outside the New Testament of the persecution of believers. (42)

The Dead Sea Scrolls complement other ancient copies of the books of the Bible. The Sinaitic Manuscript was discovered in St. Catherine’s Monastery at Mt. Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula. It has all 27 books of the New Testament, and it was written in the fourth century A.D.

The oldest New Testament manuscript is the John Rylands papyrus. It’s only a small part of John 18, but this manuscript was made in the first half of the second century—perhaps within 50 years of the original writing of John. (43)

A burial cave in 1980 in Jerusalem yielded a silver amulet engraved with a priestly blessing from Numbers 6. “This is now the oldest fragment of Scripture ever discovered, about 500 years older that [sic] the Dead Sea Scrolls” (44). Finds like this, dating to 2,700 years ago, help verify the date that Bible books claim for themselves. Proper dating of biblical books is crucial especially to show prophecy and fulfillment. Demonstrating prophecy and fulfillment attests the divine origin of the Bible and its message.

The Temple Scroll is the largest Dead Sea scroll with an overall length of about 26.5 feet and a height of 9.5-10 inches. It reflects the mind of the Essenes regarding ceremonial laws in Judaism.

As an example, the Essenes believed that the Old Testament laws dealing with ritual cleanliness in the Israelite camp in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 23:10-14, for example) had to be applied to the entire city of Jerusalem. The Essenes were forbidden to have toilets inside the city. They had to go outside the camp (city) to go to the toilet. And because that was more than a Sabbath day’s journey, they just could not

go on the Sabbath. (50)

One of the most famous Dead Sea Scrolls ...is MMT, which lists a series of religious laws ...over which the Dead Sea Scroll sect (perhaps the Essenes) disagreed with other Jews, presumably those Jews (probably the Pharisees) whose allegiance was to the Temple priesthood. ...Here are some of the concerns raised in MMT: If pure water in a pure vessel is poured into an [ceremonially] impure vessel, the water in the impure vessel certainly becomes impure; but does the impurity travel up the poured stream of water so that the remaining water in the pure vessel also becomes impure (along with the formerly pure vessel)? Further, when someone purifies himself or herself in a ritual bath... is the purification effective immediately ...or only when the sun sets? The centrality of these kinds of questions to the Dead Sea Scroll community amply demonstrates the importance of ritual purity at the time. ...Stone vessels, unlike ceramic and glass vessels, were not subject to impurity. ...It made sense to purchase a vessel that could not become unclean, for once a vessel became ritually unclean, it had to be taken out of use. An impure pottery vessel, for example, had to be broken. ...Dung vessels were made of a mixture of animal dung and clay, which was dried in the sun. They were used mainly for the storage of dry materials, such as wheat, barley and lentils. Earthen vessels were defined as having been made of unfired clay. Because stone vessels were also unfired, allowing the stone to remain in its natural state, they were grouped with earthen vessels. (Magen 46-52)

The Temple Scroll was confiscated by the Israeli military from an antiquities dealer following the 1967 Six-Day War. Before the Israeli victory in that short war, both the dealer's shop (in Jerusalem) and his home (in Bethlehem) were under Jordanian control. The dealer had attempted to negotiate the sale of the Temple Scroll for a million dollars, had refused \$130,000 and was paid \$105,000

Chapter 4: Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls

following the confiscation of the scroll. (Shanks, “Magnificent” 35)

An interesting contrast occurs between the Manual of Discipline and the Gospel of Christ.

But in the Manual of Discipline, when a member was accepted into the Qumran community, he had to swear to love the sons of light and “hate the sons of darkness for all eternity.” (Humble, *Archaeology* 50-51)

Jesus, however, taught: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43-44).

Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls and these many other manuscripts, we can have great confidence in the text of the Bible. When we read the Bible, we don’t need to ask, “Is this book just like it was written by Matthew and John and Paul?” We don’t need to ask that question. We can be sure that it is. (Humble, *Archaeology* 44)

Recommended Reading

Isa. 2:2-3; 7:14; 9:6-7; 53:1-12

Questions

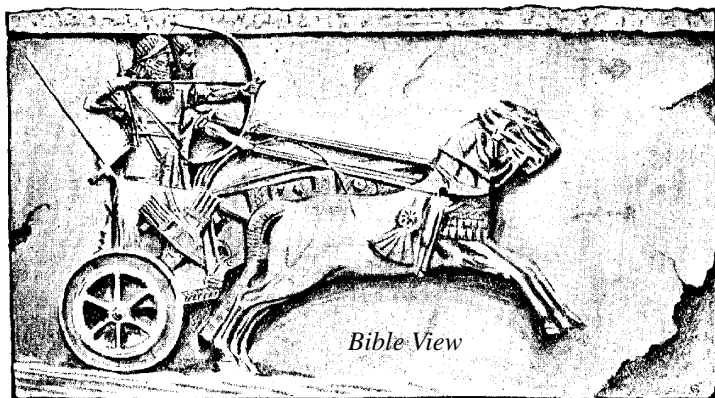
1. Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls were found northwest of what large body of water?
2. The Dead Sea Scrolls were made up of about how many books?
3. In what year were the Dead Sea Scrolls found?
4. How much older is the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah than the previously oldest manuscript of the Book of Isaiah?
5. In about what year was the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah written?
6. What is the significance of the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah compared to the next oldest manuscript of the Book of Isaiah?
7. What is the relationship between biblical manuscripts found

Chapter 5: The Missing Superpower

since the King James Version was translated and more recent Bible translations?

8. What was the apparent purpose of the copper scroll among the Dead Sea Scrolls?
9. What Jewish sect is cited often as having lived at Qumran and perhaps hid the Dead Sea Scrolls in nearby caves?
10. What is the material on which the oldest fragment of Scripture has been discovered, and about how old is that biblical reference?
11. Why is it important to correctly establish the dates of biblical books?
12. How would you describe some of the questions over which ancient Jews concerned themselves (i.e., from the Temple Scroll)?
13. How does archaeological discovery enhance one's understanding of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:43-44?
14. How does archaeological discovery contribute to the Christian's confidence that God's Word is manifest in our contemporary Bible translations?

Chapter 5: The Missing Superpower



An ancient nation, a superpower, that though mentioned in the Bible was otherwise unknown was the Hittite Empire. Critics, therefore, indicted the Bible as historically inaccurate on this account—until through archaeology the Hittite Empire’s capital city was unearthed in Turkey. The Hittites were contemporary with the Patriarchs.

In 1906 ...125 miles east of Ankara, Turkey... The massive site of more than four hundred acres (compare the eight and one-half acres of biblical Jericho) proved to be the capital of the Hittite Empire. ...a large Hittite royal archive of over ten thousand clay tablets in the citadel area. This archive included a treaty between the Hittites and Ramses II... (Free and Vos 108)

The Hittites are a striking example of a chapter in Old Testament history that was once dismissed as unreliable, or even mythological, but now must be accepted as trustworthy history thanks to 20th-century archaeological work. ...Who might be interested in the Hittites today? Anyone concerned about the credibility of Scripture. It is a moving experience

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for the Bible believer to wander through the ruins of Hattusas or view the Hittite art and clay tablets in the Ankara and Istanbul museums. Just a century ago, there were no Hittite ruins, no art and no written records, so the Bible accounts were brushed aside as myth. Not so today—thanks to these archaeological finds. (Humble, “Hittites” 36-38)

The Hittites were a European tribe that migrated south to Asia Minor and dominated native people there before extending its influence through the Fertile Crescent. A Hittite prayer mentions seeing the sun rise out of the sea and may indicate that the Hittites formerly lived in the vicinity of either the Black or Caspian seas (Ceram 92-93). The Hittite Empire employed the first known “constitutional monarchy” (128), which means that even the king had to obey the law; Hittite kings were not above the law. Their king lists have been deciphered, and their language has been successfully translated, too. Hittite control of Asia Minor extended from 1800 B.C. to 1200 B.C. (213).

The Hittite migration represents the first conflict between ‘East and West’ in recorded history. The Hittite Empire grew to become one of just a few major powers in the Fertile Crescent, conquering Babylon, fighting Assyria and successfully warring with Egypt (3-5). Assyrian and Egyptian records note skirmishes with the Hittites over a period of 700 years (27).

In part, their military prowess was dependent upon their refinement of the battle chariot—the tank of that era. The Hittites used spoked wheels instead of solid wheels on their chariots, which improved maneuverability and speed. Whereas their opponents assigned two personnel per chariot—a driver and a warrior, the Hittites assigned an additional warrior—for one on each side of the driver (156-157).

The Hittite empire was centered in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). At its maximum, it extended from the Aegean coast of Anatolia [Asia Minor], east to the Euphrates River, southeastward into Syria as far as Damascus, and south along the eastern Mediterranean coast of the Levant. Hittite

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King Mursuli sacked Babylon around 1600 BC, but did not attempt to hold the region. (Shelly 82)

The first battle in history about which enough written details survive to reconstruct it was between the Hittites and Egypt at Kadesh in 1296 B.C. on the Orontes River. Pharaoh himself and the remnants of his army only survived that contest because the Hittites stopped to plunder the abandoned Egyptian camp and lacked sufficient resolve to pursue the fleeing Egyptians. The two nations settled for an impasse in what was supposed to be a war to decide control of the land between the Nile and Tigris rivers. Consequently, the first detailed peace treaty in history brought peace between these two ancient superpowers. This peace treaty survives in both Egyptian and Hittite languages and has been unearthed respectively in their two nations (Ceram 67-194).

Rameses II and Hattusilis made a treaty of non-aggression in 1284—the first known in history. Both Egyptian and Hittite copies of this treaty have been preserved; the border between the two powers is set to the south of Kadesh in middle Syria. (Lewis 92)

One copy of this treaty, in the Hittite language, is engraved in cuneiform script on tablets found near Hattusas; two other copies, in Egyptian hieroglyphics, are carved on walls in Thebes and Karnak. (Shanks, “Expedition” 76)

About a hundred years later, the Hittites themselves were annihilated by invaders, who instead of occupying the conquered cities, plundered and abandoned them. “At one blow the entire Hittite Empire was wiped out” (Ceram 97-198). The swiftness and utter desolation of the Hittite Empire doubtless contributed immeasurably to its obscurity until unearthed recently.

Seldom has a world power collapsed more suddenly or completely. Having rivaled Egypt in the early thirteenth century for the control of western Asia, the Hittites were by the middle of that century having increasing difficulty

Chapter 5: The Missing Superpower

in maintaining their position against coalitions of Aegean peoples in western Asia Minor. In spite of temporary successes, they were unable to stave off disaster. In the decades after ca. 1240 they were engulfed in a tide of race migration that tore their brittle structure from its moorings and washed it forever from the map of history. By the end of the century inscriptional witness fails, and it is evident that the Hittites have gone under. (Bright)

Usually a political and commercial economy maintains some residual presence even when overpowered (e.g., Greek), but the Hittite ruination was sufficiently comprehensive to erase their entire culture.

However, remnants of Hittites remained in various places. In the description of the land that the Israelites were to possess, God cited a people called the Hittites (Joshua 1:4). “The Hittite Empire dominated the heartland of Asia Minor from 1750 B.C. until about 1200 B.C. ...The Old Testament has about 40 references to the Hittites” (Humble and Fair 14).

Until early in the twentieth century, the Hittites were unknown and not considered historical. The Bible, accordingly, was faulted. Since the discovery of the Hittite capital city in mountainous Turkey, additional Hittite sites have been discovered. Once more, the Bible has been exonerated by archaeological discoveries. This can only heighten the faith of Bible believers!

Recommended Reading

Gen. 23:1-10; Deut. 7:1-4; 2 Sam. 11:1-24

Questions

1. The ancient capital city of the Hittites has been unearthed in what contemporary country?
2. What was unique about the monarchy practiced by the Hittites?
3. The Hittite migration represents the first conflict between _____ in recorded history.

Chapter 5: The Missing Superpower

4. The Hittites battled the Egyptians off and on for how many years.
5. Describe a primary modification made by the Hittites that helped them gain superiority on the battlefield.
6. Two copies of the first _____ in recorded history was between the Hittites and the Egyptians.
7. What happened to the Hittite nation, and why were the Hittites obscured from the historical record until discovery of their capital city in the 20th century?
8. About how many references to the Hittites appear in the Bible?

Chapter 6: The Moabite Stone



A German Anglican medical missionary happened on the Moabite Stone (or Mesha Stele) on August 19, 1868 while visiting a Bedouin camp in what today is the country of Jordan. Dibon, the site where the Moabite was found lying atop the ground, fallen on its back, lies 20 miles east of the Dead Sea just north of the Arnon River (Halley CD-ROM). The Moabite Stone parallels the biblical account (2 Kings 3:4-27) of

Moab's rebellion against the dominance over it by Israel. In this case, the nations of Israel and Judah collaborated to subdue Moab.

There are several reasons for which the Moabite Stone is an important archaeological discover. *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* records, "The Moabite stone has profound biblical relevance. Historically, it confirms Old Testament accounts" and "it mentions no less than 15 sites listed in a remarkable degree supplements and corroborates the history of King Mesha recorded in 2 Kings 3:4-27." "The incident is otherwise only in the Bible itself (2 Kings 3:4ff)" (Cross).

Its importance as an ancient monument can hardly be overemphasized. When translated, it turned out to be a victory monument erected in the ninth century B.C. by Mesha, king of Moab. The script is Phoenician, sometimes called paleo-Hebrew; it is the same script used by the Israelites. Also the language the Moabites used, as revealed in the inscription, is almost identical to that used by the Israelites. ...The conflict between Moab and Israel is also described in the Bible but,

Chapter 6: The Moabite Stone

not surprisingly, from a different angle. ...The Moabite Stone describes events not mentioned in the Bible and the Bible describes events not mentioned in the Moabite Stone. Both accounts—in 2 Kings 3 and in the Moabite Stone—begin by telling the reader that King Mesha had been a vassal of the king of Israel, but had rebelled... Mesha's stele also makes sport of Israel's God, Yahweh... This occurrence of the name Yahweh, spelled just as it is in the Hebrew Bible, is the earliest reference to Yahweh in any known inscription or text.... Mesha's account of events confirms the fact that the area north of the Arnon River was occupied by Israelites before Mesha's rebellion; Mesha also confirms that these Israelites belonged to the tribe of Gad...(Horn)

Easton's Bible Dictionary remarks:

This inscription in a remarkable degree supplements and corroborates the history of King Mesha recorded in 2 Kings 3:4-27. ...This ancient monument, recording the heroic struggles of King Mesha with Omri and Ahab, was erected about B.C. 900. ...It is the oldest inscription written in alphabetic characters, and hence is, apart from its value in the domain of Hebrew antiquities, of great linguistic importance. (Easton)

The *New Bible Dictionary* notes, "The great importance of this inscription linguistically, religiously and historically lies in its close relation to the Old Testament. The language is closely akin to Hebrew" (Douglas). Horn also says "the Moabite Stone with its text on 34 lines is still the longest monumental inscription that has been discovered anywhere in Palestine, east or west of the Jordan River."

"The Moabite Stone is a black basalt [smooth volcanic stone] stele; that is, an upright monument with a flat base and a rounded top. ...The inscription of 34 lines was incised on its front with a raised frame surrounding it on both sides and on its rounded top" (Horn). The Moabite Stone is three feet ten inches tall, two feet wide (*ISBE*). "A famous example of such a freestanding stele is the

Chapter 6: The Moabite Stone

Moabite Stone, inscribed by the Moabite king Mesha in the ninth century B.C.” (Lemaire “Fragments”).

Negotiations to purchase the Moabite Stone were complicated when the Bedouins realized westerners had a keen interest in acquiring it. After more than a year of failed negotiations, the Ottomans or Turks who loosely controlled the Palestinian area determined to seize the Moabite Stone with a military force. Consequently, the Bedouins “broke the stone into countless pieces by heating it in a fire then pouring cold water on it while it was white-hot. The fragments were then distributed among the local Bedouin, who put them into granaries to serve as talismans to guarantee the fertility of the soil” (Horn). Fortunately, “a paper squeeze (a papier-mâché impression)” was made during the period of negotiations. “Later the French secured the pieces, and by putting them together—along with pieces of the paper squeeze—saved the inscription. It is now in the Louvre Museum (Halley CD-CROM). “The 57 pieces thus salvaged comprise approximately two-thirds of the original inscription” (Horn).

Recommended Reading

2 Kings 3:4-27

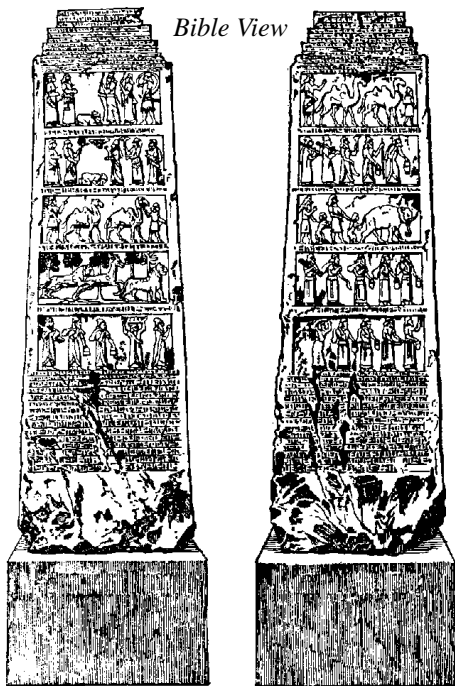
Questions

1. Old Testament Moab was in what modern country?
2. True or False. The Moabite Stone was discovered after much laborious excavation.
3. True or False. The Moabite Stone fundamentally refutes the biblical text about the existence of Israel and Moab.
4. True or False. The Moabite Stone provides additional information to what the Bible records about wars between Israel and Moab.
5. True or False. There are numerous accounts of war between Israel and Moab besides the biblical account and the Moabite Stone.

Chapter 6: The Moabite Stone

6. True or False. The Bible and the Moabite Stone agree about the respective kings of Israel, Judah and Moab.
7. True or False. The Moabite Stone disagrees with the Bible respecting the name of the Israelites' God.
8. Name the river that separated between Israel east of the Jordan River and Moab to their south.
9. Which tribe of Israel was on the northern border of Moab?
10. In which century was the Moabite Stone erected?
11. What is the oldest example of an inscription in alphabetic characters?
12. The written language of the Moabites was similar to what other written language?
13. The Moabite Stone is the longest monumental inscription in Palestine with how many lines of text?
14. Describe the appearance of the Moabite Stone.
15. How did the Moabite Stone come to be broken into several pieces?
16. How many pieces of the Moabite Stone were recovered and comprising how much of the Moabite Stone?
17. How was the text for the missing pieces of the Moabite Stone reconstructed?
18. Where is the Moabite Stone today?

Chapter 7: The Black Obelisk



Ancient people often carved their accomplishments indelibly into stone. One such boastful achievement permanently etched into history is the Black Obelisk. An obelisk is “an upright 4-sided usually monolithic [single great stone] pillar that gradually tapers as it rises and terminates in a pyramid” (*Merriam*). The Black Obelisk of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III records tribute brought to him by other kings. One of these tribute-paying monarchs was the Israelite Jehu. He brought tin, gold and silver. Though Jehu is a biblical character, this particular event

is not chronicled in the Bible (Schneider 26-33, 80, 82).

This was an unhappy time in Jehu’s reign, but this scene on the Black Obelisk is very important because it is the only contemporary picture of a Hebrew king in existence — Jehu, who reigned about 840 B.C. (Humble, *Archaeology* 19)

The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser provides extra-biblical information regarding Israel’s King Jehu’s subjection to Shalmaneser III of Assyria.

Tiglath-Pileser III, also known as Pul, seized the Assyrian throne and proceeded to build an empire. He incorporated Babylonia into the Assyrian Empire and moved to conquer Syria and Palestine. Though the Bible does not address the subjection of Israel to Assyria under his reign, Tiglath-Pileser’s records, which have

been discovered, augment the Bible. King Menahem paid tribute to remain independent (Humble, *Archaeology* 19). When Tiglath-Pileser died, Israel rebelled, refusing to continue paying tribute. Consequently, the new king of Assyria, Shalmaneser V, laid siege to Samaria. About the time Samaria fell, Shalmaneser died and was succeeded by Sargon II, who completed the disposition of Samaria regarding its government and enrollment of booty and slaves.

The ten northern tribes, calling themselves Israel, had formed themselves into a nation in opposition to the two southern tribes, subsequently known as Judah. However, with the fall of Samaria, Israel's capital, many of the survivors of the ten northern tribes were carried away. The so-called ten lost tribes of Israel never returned as a unit from captivity. Poor Israelites left in the land formerly occupied by the ten northern tribes intermarried with Gentiles who Assyria resettled there from other areas of Assyrian conquest. This people of mixed Jewish and non-Jewish ancestry became known as Samaritans, a few hundred of which survive to the present; interestingly, this group embraces the first five books of the Old Testament only and accordingly attempts to practice some tenets of Judaism.

Recommended Reading

2 Kings 10:18-29

Questions

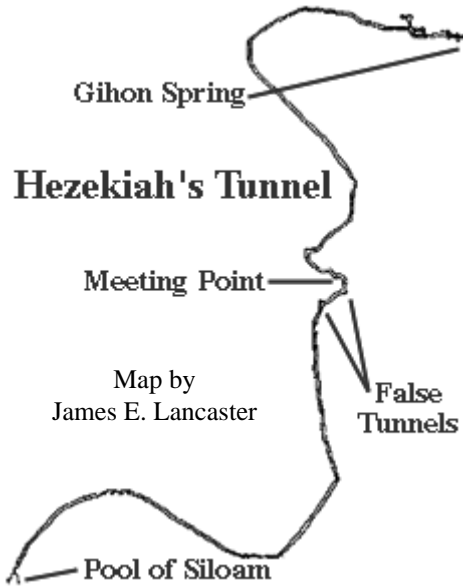
1. Ancient people often carved boastful accounts of their achievements in what?
2. The Black Obelisk chronicled the accomplishments of a king from what ancient nation?
3. Name the king of Israel whose depiction appears on the Black Obelisk.
4. This king of Israel paid tribute in the form of what three things?
5. True or False. The Bible records the event that appears in the

Chapter 7: The Black Obelisk

historical record on the Black Obelisk.

6. How many tribes comprised the northern kingdom of Israel?
7. Explain the origin of the people known as the Samaritans.
8. True or False. None of the people known as the Samaritans survive to the present day.
9. What part of the Old Testament did Samaritans attempt to practice?

Chapter 8: Hezekiah's Tunnel



The Bible account of the Jewish kings (and other biblical narrative) is sufficiently confirmed by extra-biblical evidence to thwart the assault on the historicity of that era as it is depicted in Scripture. Often, extra-biblical evidence not only provides inde-

pendent verification of many biblical events, it introduces additional information about biblical events and sometimes other incidents simply not recorded in Scripture.

Assyrian and Babylonian records confirm the existence of the following kings of Israel and Judah: Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Pekah, Hosea, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh and most probably Uzziah. These records are more than just king lists; often they describe specific historical events, such as the siege of Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign and the tribute he paid. The Moabite Stone mentions Omri, Israel and Gad. The Lachish ostraca give details about Babylonian troops in Palestine. The Samaria ostraca make reference to the territory of Manasseh. The inscription from Hezekiah's Tunnel, while not mentioning his name, is further evidence for the Biblical narratives (Freedman 79).

Hezekiah's tunnel was a conduit from a water source outside the city of Jerusalem to within the city that King Hezekiah had constructed before and in anticipation of a siege of Jerusalem by

Chapter 8: Hezekiah's Tunnel

the Assyrians. This was not a unique engineering feat; the city of Megiddo much farther northwest of Jerusalem had a similar conduit.

Megiddo also had a large tunnel to provide a water supply in time of siege. ...The ancient steps going down the shaft can still be seen. Then a tunnel 200 feet long was cut through the rock to a spring outside the tell. Finally the spring was covered and concealed, so the only access to the water was from inside the city (Humble, *Archaeology* 8).

In addition, centuries later, King Herod the Great also constructed an aqueduct and tunnel between Mt. Carmel and Caesarea to provide drinking water (13½ miles).

Hezekiah had a conduit constructed from a pool outside Jerusalem (Upper Gihon) to a cistern (Pool of Hezekiah) on the inside of the city walls (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chron. 32:30). The tunnel is six feet high and about 1,800 feet long. A dedication inscribed in stone was found in 1880 that since has been removed to a museum in Istanbul. Workers constructed the tunnel from opposite ends, following a serpentine route. Pick marks from opposite directions and an uneven floor evidence the juncture of the two construction crews (Free and Vos 182). The tunnel inscription reads:

This is the story of the boring through. While the workmen lifted the pick each toward his fellow and while three cubits remained to be bored through, the voice of a man was heard calling to his fellow, for there was a split in the rock on the right hand and on the left. And on the day of the boring through, the tunnellers struck, each in the direction of his fellows, pick against pick. And the water started to flow from the source to the pool, 1,200 cubits. And the height of the rock above the heads of the tunnellers was 100 cubits. (Humble, *Archaeology* 33)

The length and irregular path of Hezekiah's tunnel have bewildered contemporary men for years.

...[S]cholars have puzzled over how the two teams digging

Chapter 8: Hezekiah's Tunnel

from opposite ends of the city managed to meet in the middle, especially after the winding route they took. And why did they follow such a circuitous route when it would have been easier—and shorter—to tunnel in a straight line? From the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam in a straight line is only 1,050 feet; the actual length of the tunnel, however, is 1,748 feet, more than 66 percent longer than necessary. (Gill 23)

Some have supposed that the ancient engineers were following and widening a small natural fissure through which water was already seeping.

Archaeological examination of Hezekiah's Tunnel provided information by which the biblical *cubit* could be measured (though the cubit from time to time and nation to nation may have varied).

An inscription at the entrance written in the old Hebrew alphabet tells that this tunnel is twelve hundred cubits long. Measurement of the tunnel revealed that it was about eighteen hundred feet long, thus demonstrating that the cubit was about eighteen inches. (Free and Vos 39)

Otherwise, a cubit is the distance between the tip of one's elbow and the end of his fingers.

Tourists can wade through the partially flooded conduit that Hezekiah constructed many centuries before. Archaeological discovery again corresponds to the biblical account.

Recommended Reading

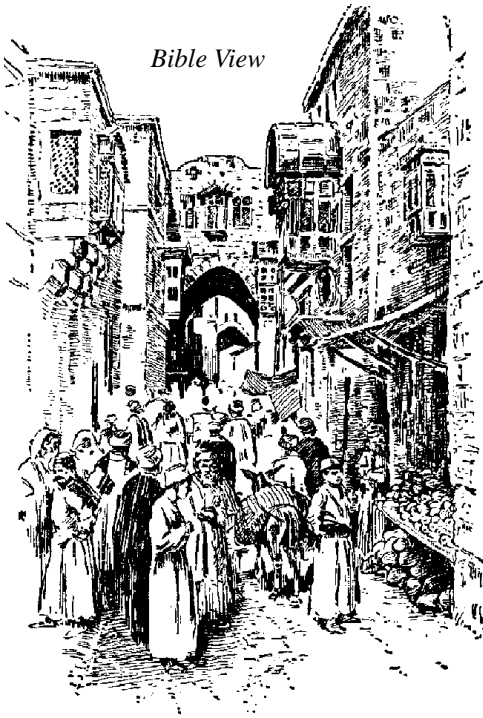
2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:1-8, 30.

Questions

1. True or False. Archaeology often verifies many biblical accounts through extra-biblical evidence, and sometimes also providing additional details not recorded in Scripture.
2. True or False. King Hezekiah was a king over the northern kingdom of Israel (comprised of ten tribes).

Chapter 8: Hezekiah's Tunnel

3. Hezekiah's Tunnel was designed to provide water to Jerusalem in the anticipation of a siege of Jerusalem by what ancient nation?
4. True or False. Hezekiah's Tunnel was unique in that it was the only ancient conduit designed to bring water inside a city, especially during time of siege.
5. About how long was Hezekiah's Tunnel?
6. True or False. Amazingly, ancient engineers, working in one direction, carved a straight tunnel from the outside pool to the inside pool.
7. How does Hezekiah's Tunnel provide useful information about an ancient measurement that the Bible mentions often?
8. What is the determination of the size of a cubit, and how, then, might this measurement vary?



Chapter 9: Jerusalem

Historically, the city of Jerusalem has been the most important city in the world, for a number of reasons, and from a number of perspectives. Politically, Jerusalem remains a city of primary interest because of the ongoing clashes between Israelis and Palestinians, and because of the more distant nations that choose to involve themselves in the conflict through their support or opposition of the Israelis and Palestinians.

Religiously, Jerusalem remains a city of primary interest because it is highly regarded and an object of dispute respecting Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, for the true Christian, the importance of Jerusalem is relegated mostly to the historical part it has played in the unfolding of God-given religion and its symbolism respecting eternity (Rev. 21:2, 10-27). For instance, knowledgeable Christians do not possess a premillennial appreciation of the earthly city of Jerusalem.

Literally, once Jerusalem was the center of the world geographically. While one might be a world traveler anciently and bypass the city of Jerusalem, Canaan of which Jerusalem was the longtime capital constituted the land bridge between Europe to Africa and from Asia to Africa. Religiously, the land of Canaan and especially the city of Jerusalem has been central to Patriarchy, Judaism and Christianity. A 1585 woodcut map of the world depicts Jerusalem as the center of the world; Jerusalem appears as the middle of a blossom, whereas the

Chapter 9: Jerusalem

continents of Europe, Asia and Africa look like petals (Rendsburg 25).

The climate of Palestine is comparable to the climate of southern states in the United States, but with some differences owing to the distinct topography of Palestine. The city of Jerusalem is about 30 miles east of the Mediterranean Sea and 14 miles west of the northern end of the Dead Sea. It is five miles north of Bethlehem, the birth place of Jesus, and 120 miles south of Mount Hermon. Jesus Christ was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem on a cross between two thieves. Jesus rose from the grave three days after his death. Fifty days after his death, the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus' apostles to preach the Gospel and the church began. That day about 3,000 souls were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and added to the church (Acts 2).

Throughout history, the city of Jerusalem has worn many other names, too. Biblically, this city was first known as Salem (Gen. 14:18); it was here that the priest and king, Melchizedek, lived in Abraham's day. Before its conquest by King David's armies, it was called Jebus (Judges 19:10). Though additional biblical and political names have been variously assigned to the city, it is enough for the student to remember the names Salem, Jebus and Jerusalem. The several different names for Jerusalem resulted from its possession by many different peoples; often when Jerusalem was conquered, its new owners gave it a new name. Finally, after bearing several names over the centuries, the name Jerusalem was restored to the city. It is by this name (Jerusalem) the city is known today.

Jerusalem rests on top of four prominent hills: Mount Zion, Mount Moriah, Hill of Ophel and Hill of Acra. It was on Mount Moriah Abraham was directed by God to offer his son, Isaac. Much later, the Temple was built here. Sometimes Scripture refers to the city of Jerusalem as Mount Zion (Isa. 2:2-3).

These hills are peaks in the Central Range of mountains that run through the middle of Canaan from north to south. Jerusalem rises about 2,500 feet above sea level. The city of Jericho, 16 miles away to the west is 800 feet below sea level, a difference of 3,300 feet between the two cities.

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Naturally, valleys lie between the hills on which Jerusalem is built. However, through the years of tearing down and rebuilding the homes and walls of the city on previous ruins, these valleys are nearly filled to the level of the hills. South of the city is the Valley of Hinnom (or Gehenna); it was used as a city dump and was often on fire. Jesus used it as an example of hell. It was there also that Molech (god of the Ammonites) worship occurred, wherein living children were burnt as sacrifices (Jer. 7:31). East of Jerusalem was the Kidron Valley (sometimes called the Valley of Jehoshaphat); in it is the Kidron Brook. Intersecting these two valleys and coming southward from the center of the city was the Tyropeon Valley (also called the Valley of Cheesemakers). Across from the Kidron Valley was the Mount of Olives from which Jesus ascended back to heaven. "It was a Sabbath-day's journey from the city, meaning three thousand feet or five stadia" (Humble, *The Bible Land* 103).

A series of walls surround the city of Jerusalem. It was usual in ancient times to build walls around cities to protect their inhabitants from the dangers of wild animals and enemy armies. As cities grew in size, new walls were built to include new areas of the city, too. The walls of Jerusalem have kept many armies out and unable to conquer it. The Israelites were unable to possess it until the time of David, though Joshua hundreds of years earlier led a conquest of Canaan. Once, Jerusalem's walls prevented Assyria from taking the city. However, Babylon and Rome, at different times in history, did destroy Jerusalem, in spite of its walls. Between the conquest of Jerusalem by those two nations, Nehemiah led the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Because Jerusalem was built on top of a mountain, most of the buildings are made from stone extracted from the mountainside.

Jerusalem does not receive its rainfall equally distributed over the course of a year; most of its rain falls during three months of winter. However, numerous natural and manmade pools in and around the city collect and store enough water for the whole year. J.W. McGarvey describes the pools and cisterns in depth in his *Lands of the Bible*, beginning on page 189. Some of the more widely

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known pools are: Bethesda, Lower Gihon, Upper Gihon, Hezekiah and Siloam. Additionally, many large buildings have cisterns beneath them to collect rain water. Evidence indicates that historically Jerusalem had sufficient water for its various uses, including the immersion of about 3,000 people recorded in Acts 2:41.

As Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans within one generation of the prophecy. Also conforming to predictions of Jesus in Matthew 24, Jewish Christians escaped from the city preceding its siege by the Romans. “The church fathers Eusebius and Epiphanius said that before Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, Christians fled from the city to the town of Pella in Transjordan” (Craig).

A Jewish revolt in A.D. 66 was squashed with the destruction of the holy city in A.D. 70. “With this calamity the national identity of Judaism came to an end. The Sanhedrin and the Temple ceremonies were forever abolished. Judaism, religiously and politically, was buried!” (Jackson, *Background* 89).

Ruins dating to the destruction of Jerusalem have been excavated and confirm the event. The house of a priestly family called Kathros that was destroyed in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem has been excavated. Among the finds are: a spear leaning in the corner of one room, the skeleton of a female in her 20’s, charred wooden beams, pottery, glass, nails and coins (Humble, *Archaeology* 78, 86-87).

Josephus...represents that 1,100,000 Jews perished in the siege of Jerusalem, a vast multitude in attendance at the Passover having been shut up within the city by the beginning of the siege; that 256,450 were slain in other parts of Judea and Galilee; and that 101,700 were taken prisoners and sold into bondage. With this catastrophe Palestine ceased to be a Jewish country, and under an order of the Emperor Vespasian the entire landed property of the country was offered for sale to foreigners. Only that portion east of Jordan escaped utter ruin. (McGarvey 16)

Josephus was himself the definition of paradox: a Jewish priest

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who had once led part of the bloody revolt against Rome but who had somehow managed to gain imperial favor. At some point in the preceding years, this man born Yosef bar Mattathياهو, had assumed the Roman sounding name Flavius Josephus. Now he lived very comfortably, with Roman citizenship, in Vespasian's private house. The ruling family of Flavius would further honor him by depositing three of his books in their library and commissioning a statue of him. (Mason 58-59)

The final revolt against Rome by Palestinian Jews occurred in A.D. 132. This uprising was occasioned by orders of Emperor Hadrian that prohibited Jews from practicing circumcision, reading the Law and observing the Sabbath. Additionally, Hadrian intended to build a temple to Jupiter on Mt. Moriah. Though the Jews under the leadership of Bar-Cochebas enjoyed some victories and re-captured Jerusalem, the rebellion was crushed within two years. Thereafter, for 200 years Jews were forbidden entrance into Jerusalem under the penalty of death (McGarvey 16). Christianity then flourished in Palestine until routed by Islam.

The Roman army's long-standing military base in Jerusalem has been unearthed, preserved and is on display at Jerusalem's international convention center.

The Xth Roman Legion spent 200 years in Jerusalem, where they fought to stem both the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (66-70 A.D.), during which Jerusalem was plundered and destroyed, and the Second Jewish Revolt (the Bar-Kokhba Rebellion, 132-135 A.D.). The troops left Jerusalem before 300 A.D. (Rochman, "X Marked" 22)

In A.D. 636, Moslems out of Arabia conquered Jerusalem. Crusaders in A.D. 1099 wrested Jerusalem from the Moslems until the latter regained control temporarily in A.D. 1189. The Crusades were abandoned in 1244 and Palestine was under the Islamic jurisdiction of Egypt. The Ottoman Empire out of Turkey assumed control of Palestine from Egypt in 1517 except for the years 1832 to 1840 when Egypt temporarily regained control. European nations,

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including France, England and Russia fought over Palestine beginning in the 18th century. France and Russia warred with each other in 1853. In 1948, after Palestine had been repopulated by Jews, Israel claimed sovereignty, resulting in wars from then to the present with her Arab neighbors.

Archaeological excavation in Jerusalem is somewhat inhibited because the city is inhabited. However, because of its rich history nearly every public works project and commercial development encounters artifacts that require proper excavation and examination. "...[P]resent-day streets of Jerusalem are in some areas ten or twenty or even thirty feet above the level of the streets on which Jesus walked" (Humble, *The Bible Land* 73). "Jerusalem is probably the most excavated city in the world. And few cities hold such fascination for the public as well as for the scholar" (Shanks, "David's Jerusalem" 25).

Ultra-Orthodox Jews, however, adamantly resist archaeology because it disturbs the graves of the Jewish dead. They often resort to demonstrations and attempts to disrupt archaeological efforts, including rescue archaeology.

At its heart, the conflict revolves around centuries-old human bones. The *haredim*, who hold sacred the concept of eternal rest for the deceased, vehemently oppose the excavation of Jewish graves. The IAA [Israel Antiquities Authority], however, is instructed by law to carry out rescue excavations at construction sites where ancient human bones are found. The bones are handed over the same day they are excavated to representatives from the Ministry of Religious Affairs for reinterment. ... "If not for the Authority, the graves would simply be destroyed by the contractors' bull-dozers," he said [Amir Dori, IAA Director]. (Rochman, "Battle" 18)

Solomon's Temple was built on Mt. Moriah. However, the hill did not have a large enough summit to accommodate the planned structure Herod the Great envisioned. Therefore, Mt. Moriah was enlarged by constructing eastern, western and southern walls and

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backfilling between them and the mount. "...the foundation stones were laid not only on the natural rock, but within a bed 24 inches deep cut for them into this rock, so that nothing could move them from their places" (McGarvey 149). Some of these stones weigh an estimated 100 tons. To avoid filling the expanse between the walls and the mount solidly, huge slabs of stone resting on pillars with earth on top of the slabs were also employed (sometimes called Solomon's Stables).

The Dome of the Rock stands where the Jewish Temple once stood. J.W. McGarvey recorded the interior dimensions and firsthand descriptions of the Dome of the Rock in his book, *Lands of The Bible*, beginning on page 182. He also viewed the sacred rock within the structure and the cave beneath it. The Dome of the Rock is the oldest Muslim shrine (Humble, *Archaeology* 82). The Mosque el Aksa also sits on top of Mt. Moriah. Excavations are not permitted, therefore, on the temple mount.

Besides the so-called "wailing wall," few artifacts of the Jewish Temple have been found. A sundial, though, also has been unearthed.

This limestone sundial is the only known surviving artifact from King Herod's Temple. Found...in a pile of debris from the 70 C.E. Roman destruction of the Temple, the dial has a seven-branched menorah carved on its back. (Levy 20)

But recently a small pomegranate made of ivory was discovered. The little pomegranate has an inscription in archaic Hebrew, and it says, "Belonging to the temple of the Lord, holy to the priests." Scholars believe that this pomegranate was a decoration on top of a scepter that priests carried in the temple. (Humble, *Archaeology* 9).

Also, warning signs to Gentiles not to enter the Temple or face death have been discovered.

These warning stones help us understand the gravity of the accusations against Paul: "Men of Israel, help! This is the man . . . who brought Greeks into the temple, and he

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has defiled this holy place” (Acts 21:28) The aroused mob would have killed Paul on the spot had not the Roman troops rescued him and escorted him out of the Court of the Gentiles into the Fortress Antonio. (Humble, *Archaeology* 73, 85-86)

A depiction of Herod’s Temple is inscribed on a limestone ossuary (a stone box in which bones are deposited about a year after the initial burial). This picture inscribed in stone corresponds to descriptions of the Temple provided by Josephus.

The ossuary with the depiction of the Temple is typical. It is a little over 2 feet long, 1 foot wide, and slightly more than 1 foot high...This ossuary, like a number of others, rests on four simple pedestals. Its barrel-vaulted lid is also common, as are both flat and peaked lids. (Grossberg 47)

Jerusalem continues to intrigue the Bible believer respecting its religious significance to Patriarchy, Judaism and Christianity, as well as because of the rich bed of archaeological discovery it continues to be. Jerusalem celebrated its 3,000th anniversary as the capital of Israel in 1996 (Shanks, “Jerusalem 3000” 24-28). Israel, of course, has neither continued to exist as a nation nor occupy Jerusalem for those 3,000 years. Many of the most noteworthy and sometimes controversial, archaeological finds pertain to the vicinity of Jerusalem (e.g., the James Ossuary). Much more about Jerusalem may be found in my book, *Biblical Companions: Geography, Archaeology and Sacred History*.

Recommended Reading

Isaiah 2:2-3; Acts 6:7.

Questions

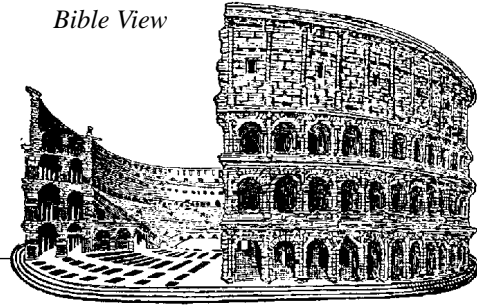
1. The city of Jerusalem has been important to what three world religions?
2. Canaan is the land bridge between what three continents?
3. The climate of Palestine, except for differences owing to local

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topography, is comparable to what part of the United States of America?

4. List two other names by which Jerusalem was known anciently.
5. List the four hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built.
6. What is the approximate elevation of Jerusalem?
7. Name the three valleys at Jerusalem that go through the city, east of the city and south of the city.
8. From what did walls encircling cities anciently protect the cities?
9. At different times in history, armies from what two foreign cities succeeded in conquering Jerusalem despite its protective walls?
10. True or False. The plentiful cedars in Palestine have always been the primary source of building material in that land.
11. List five well known pools of water in Jerusalem.
12. True or False. There was insufficient water in Jerusalem for 3,000 souls to have been immersed per the occasion of baptisms in Acts 2:41.
13. Following the Jewish revolt against Roman control from A.D. 132-135, for how many years were Jews under penalty of death forbidden to enter Jerusalem?
14. True or False. Islam predates both Judaism and Christianity.
15. True or False. Palestinian Arabs graciously invited displaced Jews from World War II to take refuge in Palestine, but more recently Palestinians have come to resist and oppose the Jews.
16. On which hill in Jerusalem was the Temple constructed?
17. List the two Islamic buildings that occupy the Temple mount today.
18. List four things that remain or have been found that pertain to the Temple mount.
19. In essence, modern man has a snapshot of the Temple of the first century in the form of what?
20. The “snapshot” corresponds to what literary evidence respecting the Temple?

Bible View



The Colosseum

Chapter 10: Rome

The city of Rome is important to the Bible student because the Mediterranean world, and Palestine in particular, in the first century when Jesus

Christ was born was under Roman domination (Luke 2:1-5). A second reason for which Rome is important to the Bible student is that the apostle Paul penned an epistle to the church in Rome, which epistle is part of the New Testament. Another reason for which Rome is important to the student of God's Word is the historical interaction of Rome with primitive Christianity, in the New Testament record as well as beyond the biblical record and in secular history. For instance, the apostle Paul at times used his Roman citizenship advantageously as a Christian (Acts 22:25-29; 23:27), while on other occasions he was the object of Roman abuse (Acts 28:17-20).

The city of Rome is important to the student of the Bible because of its place in Old Testament prophecy (Daniel Two) and New Testament fulfillment relative to the establishment of the Lord's spiritual kingdom (Acts Two). As the New Testament opened, the Roman Empire ruled the known world, including Palestine and the Jews. The Gentile rulers in Palestine at the time of Jesus' birth, childhood, ministry and crucifixion were Roman appointees. The early church began and functioned while the world was ruled from Rome. The missionary travels of the apostle Paul also occurred during the reign of and sometimes interacted with the Roman Empire. The epistles that comprise our New Testament were written to churches and individuals in this period; one of those letters was penned to the congregation meeting in Rome.

Italy, where Rome is located, is a large boot-like land mass extending

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from Europe into the Mediterranean Sea. The peninsula is 650 miles long and not wider than 125 miles. Despite its size, travel is somewhat hindered by the Apennines mountains which, traveling north to south, rise from 4,000 to a peak of 9,500 feet. Above the peninsula, Italy's borders extend about another seventy miles north and approximately 320 miles east to west. All of Italy measures 91,200 square miles.

Nearly all the few deep water harbors are found on Italy's southwestern shore; though, some of the rivers can be navigated by small boats. Lowlands consist of coastal areas between the sea and the mountains (the wider coast is on the west side), river valleys, the watershed lowlands for the Alps and Apennines, and valleys between the ridges. Whereas the coastal areas and watershed lowlands afforded productive farming due to the richness of the soil, valleys provided pastures for livestock. The mountains were covered with forests which were used for home construction and ship building.

Climate differs from the continental part of Italy to the peninsula area. The northern part of the country has definable seasons, much like the rest of Europe. The southern portion of the country enjoys tropical temperatures. None of Italy's mountains are high enough to sustain snow year round.

The mountain passes to the north encouraged settlement from Europe. A wider western coastal plain and southwestern bays invited immigrants by sea from the west. A narrower eastern coastal plain with mountains rising closely in the background inhibited colonization from the east. Two mountain chains separated by a common watershed discouraged political union of northern and southern communities. However, once united, the central location of this boot-like nation contributed to its expansion throughout the Old World.

Eventually, Rome covered seven hills; the modern city, though, lies north of the ancient city. Originally, the hills were covered with timber and separated by deep valleys which were partially flooded. The topography of the site changed dramatically due to the destruction caused by wars, reconstruction upon ruins and efforts to build a magnificent world capital city.

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The magnificence and splendor eventually characteristic of Rome resulted from (1) the influx of treasures and skilled slaves acquired through conquest of foreign peoples, and (2) the determination of its emperors to build a city equal to or greater than any the world had ever seen. From Augustus forward, emperors added to the once forested hills: temples, huge assembly halls (basilicas), open market places (forums), aqueducts, public baths, theaters, palaces, triumphal arches, statues and parks. Most early buildings in Rome were of brick and cement; later marble was used extensively, too. Thirty-one highways also led to Rome and distances to all points in the empire were calculated from a monument at the center of the Forum in the city.

Rome was founded in 753 B.C. and eventually rose to world dominance, which once attained it maintained through A.D. 476. The expansion of Roman influence met resistance from Carthage, a Phoenician city-state in Africa, in 264 B.C. Rome handed Carthage a second defeat against its general Hannibal in 202 B.C. After conquering lands west, Rome next conquered the former empire of Greece.

Parthians from the east wrested Jerusalem from Rome between 40-37 B.C. Rome installed Herod the Great as king of the Jews in 37 B.C., who reigned until his death in 4 B.C. Jesus of Nazareth was born during the waning years of Herod the Great and the narrative in the New Testament commences at this juncture.

Octavian Augustus Caesar was the first Roman Emperor and ruled when Jesus was born. Tiberius ruled when Jesus was crucified. Caligula was emperor during the time of the Book of Acts. Claudius reigned as emperor during the ministry of the apostle Paul. The emperor Trajan ruled contemporary with the Book of John.

Christianity initially received a free pass from the Romans, for it was mistakenly viewed as simply another of the numerous sects of Judaism. Judaism was a legal religion in the Roman Empire, and hence, as long as the Romans thought Christianity was a sect of Judaism, it, too, enjoyed legal status. However, later, the Roman government treated Christians harshly once Christianity was distinguished as

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different from Judaism—thereby, not having legal status. Refusing to worship the Emperor was viewed both as treason and atheism, the punishment for either being death.

Many martyred Christians were buried by fellow Christians in the Catacombs. The Catacombs beneath Rome were tunnels from eight to 10 feet high and from four to six feet wide; they continued for miles and were also used by early Christians for worship.

...the passageways of the various catacombs near the city of Rome would total 550 miles if they were extended in a straight line...it is estimated that there are nearly two million graves in them. They covered a surface area of about 615 acres. The oldest inscription that can be dated in the catacombs was made in 72...The paintings on the walls of the passageways and rooms of the catacombs show us what the early Christians thought and believed. (Free and Vos 298-299)

A primary (howbeit unintentional) contribution that the Roman Empire made to the first century world that greatly contributed to the spread of the Gospel of Christ was its system of good highways. (This is comparable to the chief contribution of the Grecian Kingdom before them that likewise contributed immensely to the ability to spread the Gospel with ease throughout the Mediterranean world—namely, the Greek language, which became universal.)

The Romans were the finest road builders—“all roads lead to Rome.” Roman roads were straight and level and were made of four layers. First was sand, then pieces of stone and rock in concrete, then crushed stone in concrete, and finally a paved surface. Drainage was provided, and where the roads went into the cities, there were raised walkways for pedestrians. Milestones were placed along the roads (4,850 feet to the Roman mile). These stones gave an indication of distance, but journeys were still reckoned in days’ journey as they had been centuries before (Genesis 30:36; 31:23). ...Fifty thousand miles of roads were built in this way through the Roman Empire, and road maps were on sale in the shops in Rome. (Gowers)

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In some five centuries, they built a network of highways that laced the empire—some 50,000 miles of first-class highways, and 200,000 miles of lesser roads. Roman road engineers were first-rate craftsmen. They surveyed the routes carefully, dug tunnels, built bridges, etc. In constructing an important road, the workers would dig a trench four to five feet deep. A bed was laid of large stones of successive layers fitted together with gravel and mortar. In prominent cities the streets might be paved with carefully fitted stones twelve inches thick by eighteen inches wide. For example, the Appian Way (which was 360 miles long) leading into the city of Rome (cf. Acts 28:15, 16) was some eighteen feet wide and paved with basaltic lava. The skill of the Romans as road-builders is evidenced by the fact that some of those ancient highways are still usable today! (Jackson, *Bible Background* 29)

“The Roman road from Jericho to Jerusalem survives in places and a few of its milestones have been found” (Humble, *The Bible Land* 22).

Recommended Reading

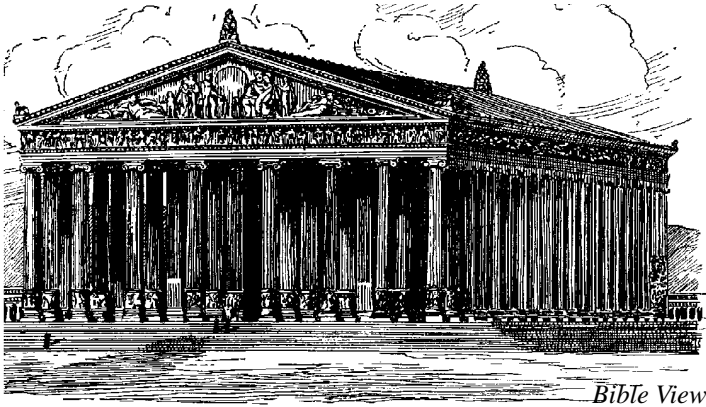
Daniel 2:31-45.

Questions

1. List four reasons that the city of Rome is important to the Bible student.
2. The city of Rome was built on how many hills?
3. How many highways led into Rome?
4. List the accepted beginning and ending dates for the Roman Empire.
5. Why was Christianity little noticed by the Roman government initially?
6. What was one primary use of the Catacombs by early Christians?
7. What contribution do the catacombs make to understanding primitive Christianity?

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8. What is the chief contribution that the Roman Empire (unintentionally) made to the spread of Christianity?
9. What is the chief contribution that the Grecian Empire (unintentionally) made to the spread of Christianity?
10. How many miles of primary roads did the Romans construct throughout its empire?
11. How many miles of secondary roads did the Romans construct throughout its empire?
12. How durable were Roman roads?



Chapter 11: Corinth

The city of Corinth interests the student of the Bible because it is one of the places where upon the apostle Paul's preaching of the Gospel a congregation of the Lord's church was established; further, Corinth is one of the cities in which the apostle labored longer than he labored in most cities (Corinth, a year and a half, Acts 18:11; Ephesus, three years, Acts 20:31). Of course, two of the epistles the apostle Paul penned to the Corinthian church appear in the New Testament. Paul evidently also wrote an earlier epistle to the Corinthians that God did not see fit to have preserved for inclusion in the New Testament (1 Cor. 5:9); interestingly, the text of epistles God intended to preserve are corroborated by multiple copies, while no copies survive of epistles God did not see fit to preserve (Col. 4:16).

Because of the excessive wickedness of Corinth, a vivid contrast existed between the Lord's people and other citizens. The Gospel was as a brilliant light in an otherwise ebony black darkness. Unfortunately, though, the church of God at Corinth was guilty of several sins for which the apostle corrected them. Some of those sins, like the incest cited in 1 Corinthians Chapter Five, may have been instances of the sinful world at Corinth influencing Christians to do evil. Evidently, the church at Corinth possessed the right attitude since it corrected the errors of which it was guilty.

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In Bible times, the city of Corinth was a fortified city and a center of commerce and trade. Situated on an isthmus (a narrow neck of land between two larger masses of land), it was a crossroads for land trading between southern and northern Greece and sea trading between East and West. Ships anchored in Corinth's west harbor off-loaded their cargo to be hauled about five miles and loaded on ships in the east harbor. Likewise, ships in the east harbor sent their freight overland the short distance to be loaded on ships in the west harbor. This procedure saved about 150 miles of sailing around Greece.

The Old World city of Corinth was built against a rock formation rising 2,000 feet. This offered complete protection from attack in that direction. The balance of the city was guarded by a double wall. However, due to its strategic location, Corinth came under attack repeatedly and was more than once destroyed, only to be rebuilt.

In the apostle Paul's day, the city of Corinth may have had a population of about 400,000—including several Jewish traders. It was also a prosperous city of many magnificent public buildings. Further, Corinth was the site of the Isthmian games, perhaps the forerunner of our modern Olympics. The Isthmian games were held every five years, and were so highly respected that warring city-states suspended warfare while they were in progress. Participants in the games leaped, ran races, threw darts, boxed and wrestled.

The inhabitants of Corinth were polytheists; they worshipped all the gods of Greek mythology. Their chief gods and goddesses were: Zeus, chief of the gods; Poseidon, god of the sea; Apollo, god of song and music; Artemis, goddess of flocks; Hephaestus, god of fire; Hermes, messenger god; Ares, god of war; Hera, wife of Zeus; Athena, goddess of wisdom and war; Hestia, goddess of the hearth; Demeter, goddess of agriculture; and Aphrodite, goddess of love. Part of this heathen worship included fornication; the temple of Venus supported 1,000 priestesses dedicated to prostitution. Citizens of Corinth were notoriously famous for their sinfulness. Citizens of Corinth were viewed as dishonest and immoral. To call one a Corinthian was to charge him with base immoralities.

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In Paul's day Corinth was a Roman Colony, built by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. In 1858 an earthquake forced the evacuation of the city. By the twentieth century nearly all evidence of ancient Corinth vanished from the surface. However, excavation has yielded some relics of this Old World city. Some fountains have been uncovered, 40 feet below the present ground surface. Also discovered were a theater, a portion of an ancient temple, parts of statues of gods and goddesses, some low walls, colorful murals, vases, ancient bath towels, lamps, theater seats and over 400 coins.

Among the biblically related attractions at Corinth, the judgment seat before which the apostle Paul was brought can still be viewed (Acts 18:12). Also dating to the days of Paul in Corinth, inscriptions remain identifying a synagogue (Acts 18:4) and pavement laid at the expense of Erastus (Romans 16:23). "Erastus laid this pavement at his own expense. ...this Erastus is the same man who was a friend of Paul and sent greetings to the church in Rome" (Humble, *Archaeology* 138). Only about one percent of the site was excavated in the first one hundred years since it was deserted. In our time, a city of about 18,000 is found three miles from the ancient site.

Since the terrain around Corinth is rocky and land is limited, farming is not a suitable pursuit. The geographical location, though, more than made up for what the soil lacked. Corinth was a commercial hub of activity for both highways and sea lanes. Corinth also took advantage of large deposits of white and cream colored clay and became an early leader in the ceramic industry.

Biblical era Corinth was a real place, inhabited by real (wicked) people and that also had a real, struggling congregation of the Lord's church. Given the moral decay everywhere around us in the contemporary world, we ought to be able to identify with the challenges Christians faced in first century Corinth. There were no perfect members of the church, either; even many church members had been the most despicable sinners and many yet struggled with sin in their lives. How much like the world and the church today! The Corinthian congregation struggled forward, and churches of

Christ today can and must do the same.

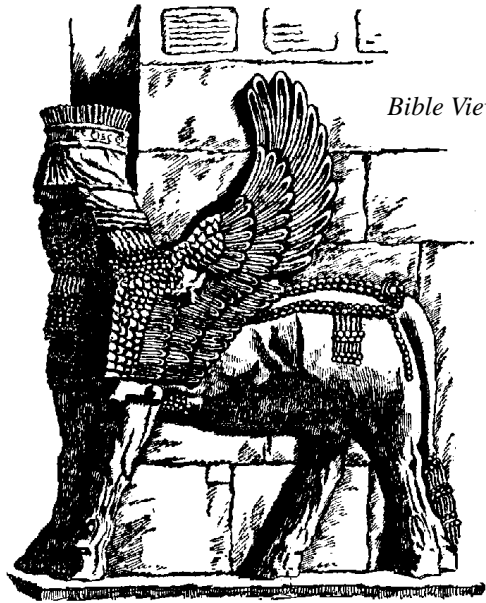
Recommended Reading

Acts 18:1-11.

Questions

1. The preaching of which apostle contributed to the establishment of the Lord's church at Corinth?
2. How long did the apostle remain at Corinth?
3. The apostle Paul wrote at least how many epistles to the Corinthian church?
4. True or False. Having become Christians, the Christians who comprised the church at Corinth were immune to sin characteristic of their former lives.
5. Describe the geography and topography of the land surrounding the city of Corinth.
6. On what did the city of Corinth rely for protection from enemy armies?
7. What was the population of Corinth in the first century?
8. What famous sporting competition occurred in Corinth?
9. List some of the polytheistic gods worshipped by citizens of Corinth in the first century.
10. What kind of reputation did people from Corinth have in the first century?
11. List some of the things discovered through archaeology from the ruins at Corinth.
12. True or False. Corinth has been exhaustively excavated for archaeological pursuits.
13. Besides being a commercial hub, Corinth was noted for what local industry?
14. True or False. Circumstances surrounding first century Corinth differ so drastically from circumstances today that little comparison can be made between then and now.
15. True or False. Though a troubled congregation, Corinth evidences that upon repentance of sin, Christians and congregations can persevere spiritually.

Chapter 12: Iraq



The word “Iraq” does not appear in the Bible. Why, then, would anyone entitle a chapter in a study book about biblical archaeology with the label, “Iraq”? Amazingly, the contemporary country of Iraq is the geographical location of numerous ancient, biblical places. The Garden of Eden

is thought to have been in what is now Iraq. Likewise, Babylon and Nineveh (the former capital of Assyria) are in Iraq. Ur of the Chaldees from which Abraham migrated to Canaan is also in Iraq. Consequently, some of the richest archaeological finds pertaining to the Bible have been found in the country of Iraq. Personally, it boggles the writer’s mind to note that so much of the biblical narrative in some way has to do with land now almost completely inhabited by Muslims in the country of Iraq. “Iraq is rich in historical lore, for it contains the ruins of the great Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian cities of antiquity. From Ur of the Chaldees, in southern Iraq, Abraham and Terah began their pilgrimage” (Pfeiffer 253). As this is written (2007), coalition troops occupy several archaeological sites and are waging war among others.

While the exact location and precise size of the Garden of Eden cannot be known for sure, enough biblical information and contemporary evidence correspond to determine that the Garden of Eden was probably in what is now Iraq. For instance, the Tigris or Hiddekel and the Euphrates rivers, two of the four rivers flowing through the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8-14), are in Iraq.

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The ancient city of Babylon, which twice rose to dominate the Fertile Crescent, is 50 miles south of Baghdad on the Euphrates River. Babylon, under the leadership of Hammurabi, rose to prominence as a world power. The Stele of Hammurabi, dating to 1700 B.C., contains a sophisticated law system (Code of Hammurabi), predating but comparable to the complexity of the Law of Moses. Literature from that era survives, some of which chronicles a similar Flood account to what is found in the Bible. Hundreds of years later, Babylon rose to dominate the Fertile Crescent again, during which era Babylon defeated the southern kingdom of Judah in 587 B.C. (Assyria earlier had defeated the northern kingdom of ten tribes called Israel in 722 B.C.). Archaeology notes that Babylon was notorious for destroying (leaving behind massive destruction) without occupying other nations with which it went to war. The second rise to world power status by Babylon was at the expense of Assyria who had been dominating the Fertile Crescent (that tillable and well watered land extending in the shape of a rainbow from the Persian Gulf to the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea to Egypt).

The city of Babylon rose out of a mud plain and straddled the Euphrates River. Lacking natural fortifications, Babylon was heavily fortified with massive walls and using the Euphrates River as a moat. Its walls were 350 feet tall, 87 feet thick and had 100 gates. No battering ram could break through the walls and no catapult could heave anything over the walls. Main street in Babylon was one mile wide. Nebuchadnezzar boasted of the magnificent city he had built. “The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30). A similar statement is imprinted in the bricks with which Nebuchadnezzar built his great city: “The fortifications of Esagila and Babylon I strengthened and established the name of my reign forever” (Free and Vos 196).

The Euphrates River passed through the middle of the city and was also directed around its four sides through a moat. Inside the moat were double walls. The Greek historian Herodotus

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claimed that the outer wall was so wide that a chariot with four horses could drive along it. ...The two sides of the city were connected by a bridge. The east side contained the palace and temples, including many ziggurats. (Shelly 69)

Babylon was noteworthy for formerly having been the site of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9) and later, the site of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: The Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Among the archaeological remains from Babylon are Flood Tablets that substantially corroborate the biblical flood of Noah's day, differing in references to polytheism instead of the monotheism of the Bible. Specifically, mankind purposed to disobey the command of God following the flood that stated, "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 9:1). Consequently, God confused their language (formerly they were of one language) and scattered them upon the face of the earth. The Flood Tablets provide human commentary on the events surrounding the Tower of Babel. The tablets read, in part: "The building of this temple offended the gods. In a night they threw down what had been built. They scattered them abroad, and made strange their speech" (Free and Vos 41). Both the biblical and secular history ascribe language to mankind from the beginning and that all humanity initially shared a common language. Some have observed that most languages demonstrate their origin from a single parent language.

During a time when Babylon dominated Judah, Jehoiachin, king of Judah, was taken prisoner to Babylon. Jehoiachin's name appears on two seals impressed on jar handles. The seal reads: "Belonging to Eliakim steward of Jehoiachin." Also, Jehoiachin's "ration receipts" in captivity were found in Babylon (Free and Vos 189-190).

The ancient city of Nineveh (capital of Assyria—not to be confused with Syria) is 225 miles northwest of Baghdad on the Tigris River. Excavations revealed that the walls of this great city were 32 feet thick and 76 feet high (Jackson, *Biblical Studies* 2). Assyria exercised its greatest power during the lifetime of the prophet Isaiah.

The northern kingdom of Israel fell to the forces of Assyria when

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Samaria was conquered in 722 B.C. The upper class and skilled tradesmen of Israel were removed into exile from which as a group there is no record of their return. Conquered people from elsewhere in lands overrun by Assyria were transported to Israel. Those Gentiles and the poorer Jews remaining in the land intermarried and became the Samaritans (2 Kings 17:24-29). “It was precisely this policy of transportation which made impossible the return of the people of the Northern Kingdom in a way comparable to the return of the Judaeans after the decree of Cyrus” (Pfeiffer 162).

The banishment of Galilee’s Israelite population by Tiglath-pileser is dramatically confirmed by the archaeological evidence. Interestingly, the exile is reflected in the absence of evidence from the late eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E.—especially as contrasted to the periods before and after. (Gal 50)

The campaigns of Tiglath-pileser differed from those of his predecessors in that they were not tribute-gathering expeditions, but permanent conquests. In order to consolidate his gains, Tiglath-pileser adopted a policy which, although not wholly novel, had never been applied with such consistency before. Instead of contenting himself with receiving tribute from native princes and punishing rebellion with brutal reprisals, Tiglath-pileser, when rebellion occurred, habitually deported the offenders and incorporated their lands as provinces of the empire, hoping in this way to quench all patriotic sentiment capable of nurturing resistance. This policy, consistently followed by Tiglath-pileser and copied by all his successors, was one of which Israel would in turn learn the meaning. (Bright)

Assyrians were especially noted as fierce warriors who through their horrific and torturous execution of enemies who refused to surrender prompted any city to which they were about to lay siege to seriously consider surrender. The Assyrians excelled as warriors and

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were renowned for their brutal, savage-like warfare despite a historical period when combat was especially personal and gruesome already. While laying siege to a fortified city, the Assyrians would impale prisoners on stakes outside the walls. Other prisoners, while yet alive, were cut into pieces, beginning with the extremities. “Their legendary barbarity and fierceness was a deliberate policy intended to foster the submission of enemies and minimize the threat of revolt by vassals” (Shelly 64). The Assyrian destruction of the city Lachish in Judah and which Sennacherib depicted in a mural in a palace in Nineveh illustrates this.

The Assyrians take some prisoners, and some of them kneel before Sennacherib and beg for their lives. Others are tortured, stretched out naked and flayed alive. Some are impaled on sharpened stakes—a cruel form of execution. . . . This remarkable art, carved in stone 2,700 years ago, and all the more remarkable because it pictures the siege of Lachish that the Bible records. (Humble, *Archaeology* 26)

Known for the brutality of their military campaigns, the Assyrians blazed a path of destruction through much of Palestine in the eighth century B.C.E. Many of the cities they conquered, however, the Assyrians later rebuilt. They also established an administrative presence in Palestine that is clearly reflected in the archaeological record. (Stern 46-47)

The Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, maintained a library of clay tablets, which included seven tablets attributing the existence of the physical universe to creation. They were found in the 1850's in an excavation of Nineveh. Assyrian king, Sargon II, completed the overthrow of the city of Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom of Israel; his palace was found in 1843, from which a 40 ton winged bull was retrieved (Free and Vos 169-171).

After the fall of Israel, Judah became subject to Assyria, though home rule with subjection to Assyria was permitted. However, when Judah rebelled, Assyria conquered cities throughout Judah and laid

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siege to Jerusalem; it was under the reign of King Hezekiah that Judah attempted to reject the Assyrian yoke. One of the cities that fell to the Assyrians provides some archaeological insight to and validation of the biblical account. Lachish, the second most important city in Judah, was one of the cities that Sennacherib destroyed.

Archaeologically, Lachish is very important to us because there is no other event of ancient history for which we have so many different kinds of records as we have here. We have the Bible account in 2 Chronicles 32:1-23. We have the Assyrian records. We have the archaeological ruins here at the site. And we have a great mural done in stone by Sennacherib. (Humble, *Archaeology* 25)

Sennacherib of Assyria was appeased by receiving tribute of gold and silver from the Temple.

The inscriptions of Sennacherib tell us of this tribute in the following words, “In addition to 30 talents of gold and 800 talents of silver, (there were) gems, antimony, jewels, large sandu-stones...ivory, maple, boxwood, all kinds of valuable treasures...which he had them bring after me to Nineveh, my royal city. To pay tribute and to accept servitude he dispatched his messengers.” (Free and Vos 179)

The Assyrian records indicate this event occurred in 701 B.C. (Free and Vos 173).

Remarkably, Assyrian history acknowledges that the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, was unable to capture Jerusalem—only it is presented in the best possible light. The following information is recorded on the Taylor Cylinder found in Nineveh and on the Oriental Institute Cylinder in the University of Chicago. “As for himself, like a bird in a cage is his royal city Jerusalem, I shut (him) up” (Free and Vos 180).

The ruins of Ur of Chaldees (Abraham’s hometown) are 230 miles southeast of Baghdad and 10 miles from the Euphrates River (though once the course of the Euphrates went through Ur); Ur is

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130 miles north of the Persian Gulf. It was here that Abram was born and reared (Genesis 11:27-30).

Aside from the amenities attributable to modern technology, early civilizations, such as evidenced at Ur, man is the same basic creature as he has been at any time in his past. Education was commonplace and literacy was high. Most citizens could read and write, and were, therefore, not limited to passing down *oral traditions*. Law and commerce were highly structured, supported by accompanying paperwork, although, in the form of clay tablets. Documents include “. . . bills of lading, invoices, letters of credit, court cases, and tax records have also come to light” (Free and Vos 46-47). Ur itself had a population of about 34,000 with about 250,000 inhabitants in the surrounding area (Jackson, *Biblical Studies* 10).

The type of house of the Abrahamic period was well illustrated at Ur. An average dwelling measured forty by fifty-two feet. The lower walls were built of burned brick, the upper of mud brick, and the whole wall was usually plastered and whitewashed. An entrance lobby led into the central court, onto which all the rooms opened. On the lower floor were located the servants’ room, the kitchen, the lavatory, the guest chamber, and also a lavatory and wash place reserved for visitors. Thus all of the first floor was utilized for the servants and guests; the second floor housed the family. The entire house of the average middle-class person had from ten to twenty rooms. (Free and Vos 46)

A drain was located in the corner of the foyer where a basin and water would be placed for washing feet (Free and Vos 63).

Ur also practiced a form of human sacrifice, requiring that the servants of a deceased king accompany him to the grave.

The fine dress and peaceful arrangement of bodies in the royal tombs indicates that the servants died willingly, probably from drinking poison. A woman was found with her fingers still on the strings of a harp, evidently playing at the king’s body at the moment of death. The royal tombs at Ur were already several hundred years old when Abraham

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and Sarah lived at Ur... (Humble, Archaeology 12-13)

Often, extra-biblical evidence not only provides independent verification of many biblical events, it introduces additional information about biblical events and sometimes other incidents simply not recorded in Scripture.

Assyrian and Babylonian records confirm the existence of the following kings of Israel and Judah: Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Pekah, Hosea, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh and most probably Uzziah. These records are more than just king lists; often they describe specific historical events, such as the siege of Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign and the tribute he paid. The Moabite Stone mentions Omri, Israel and Gad. The Lachish ostraca give details about Babylonian troops in Palestine. The Samaria ostraca make reference to the territory of Manasseh. The inscription from Hezekiah's Tunnel, while not mentioning his name, is further evidence for the Biblical narratives. (Freedman and Georghegan 79)

One of the earliest archaeologists of a sort was "Nabonidus, king of Babylon in the sixth century B.C." who delighted in demolishing ancient buildings to recover what we today would call time capsules (Free and Vos 186). Though early archaeology sometimes was little more than plunder, more recently including tools like bulldozers and dynamite, the riches of biblical archaeology especially pertain to the knowledge discernible from digging up the past. Biblical archaeology is a friend of the Bible believer. Thousands of sites have been partially excavated (with much of the items recovered not yet evaluated) and many tens of thousands of sites have not been excavated at all yet. The follower of God can be assured that whatever discoveries may be unearthed that pertain to Bible times, Bible characters or Bible places, when evaluated honestly and fairly, will amount to extra-biblical authentication of the Bible's narrative.

Recommended Reading

Genesis 11:1-9

Questions

1. Name two of the rivers that were in the Garden of Eden that are in Iraq.
2. Name the sophisticated law code from early Babylon that corresponds in complexity to the Law of Moses.
3. What is meant by the words, “Fertile Crescent”?
4. True or False. Babylon, having ample natural fortifications did not need extensive manmade protection from potential enemies.
5. True or False. The Babylonian Flood Tablets directly contradict the biblical account of the Tower of Babel.
6. Which kingdom dominated the Fertile Crescent during the ministry of the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah?
7. Which nation in what year conquered the northern Israelite kingdom of Israel?
8. Explain the development of the Samaritan race.
9. Why were the Assyrians purposely ferocious in warfare?
10. True or False. Ancient clay tablets from a Assyrian king’s library attribute the existence of the physical universe to creation.
11. True or False. Nothing large has ever been found in archaeological digs that pertain to Assyria.
12. True or False. Assyrian records correspond to biblical accounts of warfare between the Assyrians and Israelites.
13. True or False. Middle-class homes in Ur of Chaldees in the time of Abraham were simple one room, one story structures.
14. True or False. Assyrian and Babylonian records know nothing of the kings mentioned in the Bible.



Bible View

Chapter 13: Damascus

Damascus has the distinction of being the oldest continually inhabited city in the world (Genesis 14:15; 15:2). However, Damascus “has never been excavated” (Unger 1-2) owing to its continual habitation. Yet, imagine the rich bed of potential archaeological discovery beneath the feet of its teeming population, but alas, people do not take kindly archaeological excavations in their living rooms!

Today, it is the capital of Syria and home to about 4.5 million people. Damascus is on what were anciently called the Abanah and Pharpar rivers (2 Kings 5:12). The city lies at the junction of major trade routes in the Fertile Crescent. That Damascus lies in an oasis, rather than being a militarily defensible site, determined its geographic position and significance as a junction in the trade routes.

From the earliest times to the present day a great thoroughfare has joined the Syrian city with the sea. During the course of centuries the precise route has varied according to the political complexion of the country. The sea-port of Damascus was sometimes Tripolis, sometimes Beirut,

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sometimes Tyre or Sidon, sometimes Accho. ...With such a strategic commercial position on vital trade routes leading in every direction, it would be natural to conclude that the principal source of income to the people of Damascus would be the constantly passing caravans carrying their wealth westward to the rich Phoenician cities of the coast, eastward to the empires on the Tigris and the Euphrates, northward to Asia Minor, and southward to Palestine and Egypt. But it was inevitable that a city so favourably situated in a veritable garden spot and so richly endowed with natural resources, should trade on its own account. (Unger 33-35)

Water determined not only the location of settlements but also the trade routes from one center to another. One did not take the more direct route from Babylon to Jerusalem across the desert. (Lewis 71-72)

“Damascus” appears 60 times in the Bible. Some of those references are in the New Testament. It was outside Damascus, to which Saul had gone searching for Christians to incarcerate, that Jesus confronted this enemy of the cross. Three days later, following three days of fasting and prayer, a Christian named Ananias was sent by Jesus with a message for Saul. Consequently, Saul was immersed for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 22:16). Immediately, Saul, better known to us as the apostle Paul, began to proclaim the faith he formerly opposed with vigor and bitterness. He shortly had to flee (over the wall of Damascus in a basket, Acts 9:25) for his life into the region controlled by Aretas, king of Arabia (Galatians 1:17). Saul (later known as the apostle Paul) recounted this memorial series of life-changing incidents in Damascus over and over in his ministry (2 Cor. 11:32-33).

Luke, the inspired historian, provides a narrative of the venture of Saul of Tarsus to Damascus for the purpose of imprisoning Christians, howbeit instead, Saul converted to Christianity and immediately began to preach the faith he formerly persecuted (Acts 9:1-27). Luke also records the testimonies of Saul (better known to us later as the apostle Paul) respecting his conversion (Acts 22:3-16; 26:9-20).

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Damascus deserves honorable mention in any world history because of its venerable age and longtime nest of human activity. Unfortunately, though, Damascus has little to show for itself archeologically because of its uninterrupted human occupation.

Literally, there is no convenient stopping place when doing even a cursory overview of biblical archaeology. There is a nearly endless number of significant archaeological discoveries that deserve honorable mention whenever the topic of biblical archaeology is broached.

Biblical archaeology reveals both events that are also recorded in the Bible and events that are not mentioned in the Bible, though the characters associated with these latter events are named in the biblical text. Archaeological discoveries and potential archaeological finds are nearly inexhaustible. (1) Decades of unpublished archaeological discoveries line the basements of museums around the world, waiting for the funds, expertise and time to properly evaluate them. (2) Hundreds of archaeological sites have been or are being excavated and many thousands of mounds have yet to be explored.

It is important to remember that every discovery relative to biblical archaeology, when given a fair and objective evaluation, exonerates the Bible as the Book Divine—with no peers. If the Bible mentions something historically, it is true. If the Bible asserts something geographically, it is reliable. The Bible and the Bible-believer have nothing to fear from the light of archaeological inspection. The Bible is found perfectly trustworthy in every area that lends itself to scientific scrutiny, such as through the science of archaeology. The Bible, then, also is credible in areas that do not lend themselves to scientific examination, such as theology or doctrine (e.g., salvation). All of this we would expect from the Perfect Book of which God is the Author.

The following items illustrate that there are several things by which souls are saved and that both deity and man participate in the salvation of souls.

GOD'S PART

Love (John 3:16)
Grace (Eph. 2:8)
Mercy (Titus 3:5)
Gospel (Rom. 1:16)

CHRIST'S PART

The Blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5)
Our Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5)

MAN'S PART

Bible Faith (John 8:24)
Repentance (Acts 17:30)
Baptism (1 Pet. 3:21)
Obedience (Heb. 5:8, 9)
Purity (Rev. 22:14)
Faithfulness (Rev. 2:10)
Love (1 John 2:10)
Hope (Rom. 8:24)
Works (Jam. 2:24)
Endurance (Matt. 10:22)
Confessing Christ (Rom. 10:9-10)
Being Born Again (John 3:3-5)
Laying Aside Evil (Jam. 1:21)
Preaching (1 Cor. 1:18, 21)
Calling on the Name of the Lord (Rom. 10:14)
Knowledge of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15)

These represent the formula and cost of discipleship and constitute the recipe to acquire and maintain true discipleship. There are no shortcuts by which one can attain or maintain discipleship. Each aspect of the plan of salvation must be taught, learned, believed and lived continually. Salvation is not attributed to any formula or equation apart from the complete adoption of God's will for us. Men are to direct their entire lives by his divine will. God's plan

for saving man is not a magical incantation which when spoken mystically turns one into a Christian. Instead, his plan demands of men a different way of life that is only characteristic of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Recommended Reading

2 Corinthians 11:32-33

Questions

1. Name the oldest continually inhabited city in the world.
2. True or False. The oldest continually inhabited city in the world has yielded some of the most outstanding and plentiful archaeological artifacts.
3. True or False. Today, this city is sparsely inhabited.
4. Name the two principal rivers in the city of biblical Damascus.
5. Rather than being in an especially militarily defensible location, Damascus was built at an _____.
6. True or False. Damascus is not mentioned in the Bible.
7. Whose notable conversion to Christianity occurred at Damascus?
8. Besides the apostle Paul, who recounted the events of this conversion?
9. Name the disciple of Christ who participated in this conversion.
10. How well do Bible archaeology and the Bible correspond with each other in areas addressed in common by both?
11. True or False. The Bible is reliable in its historical and geographical references.
12. True or False. The Bible is credible in subjects that do not lend themselves to scientific examination, such as theology or doctrine (e.g., salvation).

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Louis has written numerous books, including: *Church Divine; Spirit Summarized; Bible Geography; Parables of Our Lord, Vols. 1 & 2; Our Restoration Heritage, Vols. 1 & 2; Cost of Discipleship, Beverage Alcohol, Preaching the Whole Counsel of God, Vols. 1-10, Rushmore's Notes on the Book of Esther, Rushmore's Notes on the Book of Ruth, Digging Up the Past, Rushmore's Notes on the Book of James, No Hermeneutical Gymnastics, Please! and Biblical Companions: Geography, Archaeology and Sacred History.*

Louis was an instructor at West Virginia School of Preaching for 10 years where he taught New Testament Church, English Grammar, Bible Geography, Acts, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and James. He has been the Editor of Gospel Gazette Online since 1999 and is an Associate Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* magazine (which goes into 80 countries). Additional experience includes Gospel meetings and lectureships, and radio, plus limited television. Louis is also past Associate Editor of a state right-to-life magazine.

Louis and Bonnie have three children and two grandchildren. They served the Cameron, West Virginia church of Christ for nearly six years, but in June of 2007 the Rushmores accepted the invitation to labor alongside of longtime missionaries, J.C. and Betty Choate, in their program of World Evangelism. Presently, they report to individuals and congregations concerning their work in world evangelism in Winona, MS as well as overseas, teaching at Bible schools and preaching in campaigns. You may contact them at (662)739-3035 or by email rushmore@gospelgazette.com.