



Biblical Companions

Geography,

Archaeology,

and

Sacred History



Louis Rushmore

**Biblical
Companions:
Geography,
Archaeology &
Sacred History**

by Louis Rushmore

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Foreword

It is with a sense of joy that I sit down to write this foreword for this latest work by brother Louis Rushmore, which he has entitled, *Biblical Companions: Geography, Archaeology & Sacred History*. I wish to begin by thanking him very sincerely for filling a need in the study of the Bible by providing information upon subjects that are not generally studied by those of us who are members of the church. I do not know of any other source from which one can obtain so much excellent material upon the subjects suggested in the title to this work. One could take several weeks combing through various source books such as Bible handbooks, dictionaries and encyclopedias to find even a small portion of the valuable material that is found in this one reproducible volume.

It can be said without fear of contradiction that the material in this book fills a great need, not only in the West Virginia School of Preaching where it is taught to each of the students on a regular basis, but if allowed to do so, it can fill an equally great need among the congregations of our people today. Due to the fact that such general subjects as geography are given only a passing glance by the public school systems of our nation today, there are very few students in the nation who are acquainted with the geography of the world. Very few know how many continents there are, where these continents are located and what countries are located within those continents. Many people of younger generations will hear of some event taking place in some part of the world and have absolutely no idea where that is! If there is a great lack of knowledge of the general geography of the world, and there is, then there is even a greater lack of knowledge of the geography of the biblical world. That is a matter that cannot, and should not, be taken lightly. If one is going to understand the Word of God as fully as he can, he must have a knowledge of

countries and places where the great events of the Bible took place. That is where, at least a part of this wonderful material, is able to fill a void that needs to be filled in the study of the Word of God. One would be greatly benefited if he were to acquire a copy of this material for the purpose of his own private study and take the time to study it at the rate of one chapter per week. Of course, if one were to teach this material to young people in the Bible study period of church activities, he would benefit the young people greatly.

Those parts of this material that pertain to the study of archaeology are of tremendous value. Of all the sciences found in the world today, the science of archaeology does more to uphold the hands of the inspired Book than any other. Archaeology does not dabble in the speculative sciences of evolution, but deals with the hard facts that are unearthed. These facts concern former civilizations, nations and people who have existed upon the earth in time past. Many archaeologists appeal to the Bible itself to find the inspiration to search for the things that are mentioned there that may not be mentioned in any other known historical record on earth. When they find the places and things that pertain to the people and events about which we can read in the Bible, the various unbelieving persons can no longer make fun of the Bible and ridicule the evidence found there because, as they see it, it is unscientific or unhistorical. For example, if one can prove that writing existed in the days of Moses, then one cannot doubt that the Law of Moses was written down in a book or scroll. The archaeological evidences that are written in this material will go a long way in confirming the faith of any unprejudiced mind in the truthfulness and accuracy of the Bible. The Bible is not, strictly speaking, a history book, but when it speaks historically, it is accurate. It is not, strictly speaking, a textbook on science, but when it speaks scientifically, it is accurate. Archaeology has played a great part in demonstrating this to the

unprejudiced mind.

Those who teach various types of scientific flimflam, such as evolution, always attempt to leave the idea in the impressionable minds which they teach that what they are teaching is absolute fact and there is no evidence to counter what they are saying. To make sure that none of the evidence which does exist, and there are mountains of it, never finds its way to the minds of the students, the false scientists have worked it out so that creation cannot be taught in the schools. It is, therefore, of major importance that scientific evidence is gathered to demonstrate that the Bible is what it claims to be, and for now that must be done by teaching such courses as the one you have in hand. That makes this material extremely valuable so far as well-balanced teaching of the Word of God is concerned.

Included in this work is that which is called *Sacred History*. There is a vast difference between History and Sacred History. Sacred History is that which has been recorded by writers who were inspired by God himself to write things down exactly as they happened. Sacred History is that which is found in the Sacred Scriptures. There is recorded in Sacred History the home life, customs, manners and daily life of such great people as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the men from whom the Jewish nation descended. Sometimes, so far as the Bible is concerned, these things are given in some detail, and sometimes they are merely mentioned in passing, but they give us great insight into the lives of those people from whom our spiritual heritage comes. Brother Rushmore has done what we consider to be an excellent job of recounting these many facts that make a study of the Bible come alive and make the people of the Bible real, living people with many of the same shortcomings and outstanding qualities that we see among ourselves today. The Bible does not make its heroes greater than they were, and it does not make its villains worse than they really were, and that is why they can "come alive" for

us as we study their lives in *Sacred History*.

Another important quality of this work, one will observe as he studies it, is the documentation. This work is literally filled with “footnotes” which give references to other works where one can continue and expand his study. This documentation also demonstrates that brother Rushmore has done his “homework” in preparing this valuable teaching tool. Just the listing of the materials found in the extensive bibliography of this work is a very valuable tool for further study and enrichment of the mind and soul.

Without reservation we commend this work to you for careful and diligent study, and we thank brother Rushmore and his co-workers for the great study and preparation that has gone into this work, and for the painstaking preparation to put it forth in the format in which you find it here. Use this material and you will be greatly blessed for having done so.

D. Gene West
Moundsville, West Virginia
August 18, 1999

Preface

The following chapters represent an expansion of my book, *Bible Geography*. Whereas the former title was written so that elementary children could grasp the topic, the lessons served equally well for older students, including adults. In fact, I used *Bible Geography* each year with additional titles in a course I teach at the West Virginia School of Preaching (WVSOP).

The current volume was composed for my course, *Bible Geography & Sacred History*, to condense several resources into one, streamlined text. As such, *Biblical Companions: Geography, Archaeology & Sacred History* is a textbook for an undergraduate course I teach at WVSOP. Further, this title was submitted and accepted as my dissertation for my Ph.D. at the Theological University of America.

It is my hope that this present literary effort will serve well to that end for myself as an instructor and for my students. Second, I hope through the use of this text to prepare my students with the necessary background to more easily comprehend and present biblical truths. Nothing in this regard would delight me more than to imagine that the foundation in *Bible Geography & Sacred History* with which I hope to equip my students may also benefit all with whom they come in contact in their ministries. Last, I hope other schools find *Biblical Companions: Geography, Archaeology & Sacred History* useful, too.

The former volume, *Bible Geography*, still occupies a useful place in younger classes through adult classes for a cursory treatment of this background material. Additional to congregational use, it is serviceable in homeschooling, family devotionals, schools and colleges. However, *Biblical Companions: Geography, Archaeology &*

Sacred History is especially adaptable to collegiate level use and is a more thorough treatment of the topic.

In both books, about 4,000 years of biblical and human history are discussed. Consequently, several hundred pieces of information are presented which my students are expected to learn and recall, initially for testing and perpetually for use in teaching and preaching. Quizzes following each chapter are recommended and serve as much as educational tools as they are indications of progress in learning. This is especially true when they are assigned to be completed in class from memory. Further, an exhaustive test concluding the book to represent the expanse of background information with which each student of the Bible should arm himself to more effectively expound the Word of God is strongly suggested.

~ Louis Rushmore

Chapter 1: Geography of the Bible Lands

Surveying the Bible Lands

Mount Ararat stands at the northern most point of the Bible lands and Mount Sinai lies at the southern most tip. The city of Rome is at the western edge of the Bible lands and the Persian Gulf marks the eastern border. The Bible lands are about 2,200 miles from east to west and 900 miles from north to south or about two-thirds the size of the Continental United States.

A strip of land suitable for farming and building cities extends from the Persian Gulf north to the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea, then south through Canaan and west to Egypt. Called the “Fertile Crescent,” it is primarily watered by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. South of this rainbow-shaped farmland is desert; north are mountains. The earliest traces of human history were discovered in the Fertile Crescent near the Persian Gulf. Several centuries before the birth of Christ, the world powers that rose and fell and battled each other all fought over this land, the Fertile Crescent.

Bible Lands Seas

The Bible lands are bounded by several large bodies of water. Also called the Great Sea, the Mediterranean Sea is the largest body of water in the Bible lands; it is 2,300 miles long, 680 miles wide and over 14,000 feet deep. Bad weather and rough seas from November through February made shipping extremely dangerous in ancient times; therefore shipping was largely restricted to other months of the year. Since there are few harbors along the coast of

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Palestine, the inhabitants of the land over the centuries made little use of the Mediterranean Sea.

The Persian Gulf is 520 miles long or three times larger than Lake Superior. This body of water is 200 feet deep. As mentioned above, it bounds the Bible lands and the Fertile Crescent on the east. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers flow into the Persian Gulf.

The Caspian Sea is the largest body of water surrounded by land in the world; it is also the largest salt lake in the world. This lake is just over 700 miles from top to bottom, 130 to 170 miles wide and 3,200 feet deep. The Caspian and Black seas form a natural boundary between the continents of Europe and Asia.

The Red Sea is about 1,500 miles long, 180 to 250 miles wide and 1,500 feet deep. Its average temperature is 80 degrees. It has two ears, the Gulf of Suez (its northwestern ear) and the Gulf of Aqaba (its northeastern ear). Between the Red Sea's two ears lies the wilderness where the Israelites wandered for 40 years and Mount Sinai.

Along with the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea forms a natural boundary between Europe and Asia. It is 750 miles by nearly 400 miles and 7,350 feet deep. The Black Sea is the largest body of fresh water in the world. It is not mentioned in the Bible.

Bible Lands Rivers

Several major rivers water the Bible lands. The Tigris River flows along side of the Euphrates River; they merge and flow 100 miles together southeast into the Persian Gulf. The combined rivers are called the Shatt al Arab. The Tigris River begins in the mountains and is 1,150 miles long. Important ancient cities such as Nineveh were built on its banks. The first Bible reference to this river identifies it as the Hiddekel River in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:14).

The most important river in the Bible is the Euphrates

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River. It is also mentioned in Genesis 2:14 as one of the four rivers in the Garden of Eden. This waterway was sometimes called simply “the river” or the “great river.” The Euphrates River was the northern boundary of the Jewish kingdom under the reign of King Solomon. One of the most famous cities on its 1,675 mile course was Babylon.

The Orontes River flows 250 miles north from near the northern boundary of Canaan to enter the Mediterranean Sea at the cities of Antioch and Seleucia. Seleucia served as the seaport for Antioch of Syria and was the port from which the apostle Paul often sailed.

The Nile River forms the longest river system in the world. The Nile River is over 4,000 miles long; it compares to the Amazon River in South America (3,900 miles long) and the Mississippi River (just under 4,000 miles long). The Nile River begins in the mountain lakes of Africa as two rivers, the White Nile and the Blue Nile, which merge along with another river 1,600 miles from its source. Without the Nile River, Egypt would be just another useless desert; therefore, some have called Egypt “the gift of the Nile.” Each year the Nile River flooded, providing much needed water and depositing rich soil washed from other places onto Egyptian fields.

The whole economy of the country depended on the Nile, which was the sole source of water for drinking and irrigation. Ancient Egyptian civilization was therefore confined to the Nile Valley. The river swells at the end of June, after the rainy seasons, in the lands where it rises and overflows and floods the valley in August and September. The annual floods bring much silt, replenishing the fertility of the soil. The water was distributed over the fields by an intricate system of dams

Bible Lands Mountains

Several mountains accent the Bible lands. Mount Ararat was the landing place of Noah's ark. It rises over 21,000 feet above sea level. This mountain lies between the Caspian and Black seas.

The Lebanon Mountains are two mountain ranges side by side just north of Canaan. Mount Hermon is one peak in these mountains. The famous Cedars of Lebanon grew on these mountains; these trees were an average of 52 feet around and 152 feet tall. Some of these trees were used to build Solomon's Temple. Only about 400 of these stately trees remain and are protected in a single grove. These mountains are "largely bare."² Rising 9,200 feet, Mount Hermon is snow covered year round.

Mount Hermon is not a rocky mountain, although some very bold and majestic masses of naked rock are seen at intervals; but its surface is composed chiefly of smooth slopes covered with soil, and in the spring it is clothed with verdure [foliage]. Even as late as June 19th, the date of our ascent, the melting masses of snow supply sufficient moisture to keep alive a considerable amount of vegetation, and the shepherds, in search of green pasture, lead their flocks of goats to its very summit. . . . The top of the mountain contains evidence that it was not always the uninhabited region that it now is; for on it are the ruins of an ancient heathen temple, and a

¹ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, New York, Prentice Hall Press, 1990 [electronic book, page numbers not indicated].

² Jack P. Lewis, "Bible Archeology and Geography," *The World and Literature of the Old Testament*, Joplin, College Press Publishing Company, c. 1979, p. 79-80.

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dwelling-place chiseled in the solid rock.³

The highest peak in the Lebanon Mountains, Jebel Makmal, is 10,200 feet. There are many other mountains in the Bible lands, some of which will be noticed when discussing specific areas.

Bible Lands Kingdoms

Some of the kingdoms and cities that ruled the Fertile Crescent were Armenia, Media, Persia, Sumer, Babylon, Assyria (Nineveh), Elam, Mesopotamia, Syria (Damascus), Phoenicia (Tyre and Sidon), Egypt and Canaan. Each of these kingdoms or cities occupied a different but neighboring place in the Fertile Crescent, though whichever nation was strongest at the time often ruled most or all the Fertile Crescent.

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.⁴

Iraq may also be the site of the Garden of Eden. At least it appears to have been in the vicinity.

Phoenicia became renown for trade through its fleet of ships that came to dominate the Mediterranean Sea.

Their cities were well-positioned for this enterprise by being located literally in the center of the known world. The Aegean, Mesopotamia, and Egypt were all roughly equidistant to the west, south, and east. For any of the three regions to trade with another, the easiest trade route was through

³ J.W. McGarvey, *Lands of the Bible*, Nashville, Gospel Advocate, p. 547.

⁴ Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Baker's Bible Atlas*, revised edition, E. Leslie Carlson and Martin H. Scharlemann eds., Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1975, p. 253.

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the Phoenician cities.⁵

Phoenician colonies were established in the Mediterranean to complement their commerce and as a reaction to increasingly frequent attack from foreign armies native to the eastern Fertile Crescent. The most successful and largest Phoenician colony was Carthage in northern Africa which survived beyond Phoenicia until destroyed by the Roman Empire.

Sumer is of special interest because excavations in that ancient city near the head of the Persian Gulf have yielded some of the earliest artifacts of human civilization (about 3,000 B.C.). “. . . the use of the wheel, writing, and other trappings of civilization appeared first in Mesopotamia, and there is no real debate over where civilization began.”⁶ “Since the earliest texts known to us are in Sumerian, we must assume that it was the Sumerians who introduced writing.”⁷ Egyptian hieroglyphics developed about the same time Sumerians advanced their own form of picture writing called cuneiform. Sumer also boasted an advanced math still in use today and one of the earliest systems of law. The ziggurat was a unique pyramid resembling an artificial mountain and served as a platform for a temple. Some Sumerian literature is preserved in cuneiform on clay tablets. Whereas in Palestine the chief building material was stone, in Sumer buildings were constructed from clay. “The Sumerian area was stoneless; buildings were made of sun-dried brick.”⁸

The Sumerians also developed the chariot and employed it in battle. However, successive powers rising

⁵ Bruce Shelly and others, *Age of Empires*, Microsoft Corporation, pp. 92-93.

⁶ Joseph P. Free and Howard F. Vos, *Archaeology and Bible History*, revised and expanded, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, p. 36.

⁷ John Bright, *A History of Israel*, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1981 [electronic book, page numbers not indicated].

⁸ Lewis, p. 76.

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in the Fertile Crescent first overpowered the Sumerians and each enjoyed a period of dominance. Babylon, on the Euphrates River, 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.

An ancient nation 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.

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 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.⁹

The Hittites were a European tribe that migrated

⁹ Bill Humble, "Hittites: Lost and Found," *Gospel Advocate*, Nashville, September 1998, Vol. 140, No. 9, pp. 36-38.

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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.¹⁰ The Hittite Empire employed the first known “constitutional monarchy.”¹¹ 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.¹²

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.¹³ Assyrian and Egyptian records note skirmishes with the Hittites over a period of 700 years.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

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

¹⁰ C.W. Ceram, *The Secret of the Hittites*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., pp. 92-93.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.

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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.¹⁶

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.”¹⁷ 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 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.¹⁸

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.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-194.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

¹⁸ Bright.

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Interaction with the heathen nations led Israel to imitate their pagan neighbors. Therefore, the Israelites adopted idolatry and exchanged their theocracy for the monarchical form of government. The greatest impact on the Israelites by neighboring nations in the Fertile Crescent was the conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyria and the defeat of the southern kingdom of Judah by Babylon.

Archaeology notes an interesting contrast between the respective conquests in Palestine by Assyria and Babylon.

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. By contrast, archaeologists have found almost no evidence of a Babylonian occupation of Palestine. Following their own conquest of the region in the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E., the Babylonians left much of Palestine in ruins and made little effort either to rebuild or to oversee the cities they had destroyed. ... The only indications of a Babylonian presence in Palestine are the massive destruction levels the Babylonians left behind.¹⁹

Palestine

The land of Canaan is of chief importance as we study the Bible lands; sometimes also called Palestine, it

¹⁹ Ephraim Stern, "The Babylonian Gap," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 26, No. 6, November-December 2000, pp. 46-47.

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includes 6,600 square miles. Under the rule of King David the kingdom was expanded to 12,000 square miles; King Solomon ruled over 60,000 square miles.

The Bible land bounded on the east by the Jordan River and on the west by the Mediterranean Sea was Canaan. The Lebanon Mountains formed the northern boundary of Canaan and desert bordered it on the south. Palestine appears to be a *special place*, chosen by God for the express purpose of the habitation of chosen people. It was here that Divine preparation to the establishment of the church or kingdom unfolded through the centuries preceding the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The world in which Israel lived was an idolatrous world and it was designed that this divinely selected race should be excluded from these nations and thus prevent intermingling with them that would destroy their essential distinctiveness. To this end this geographical peculiarity of Palestine would greatly contribute. A glance at the map will show the isolation of this country. On the west was the sea; on the south and east were deserts; on the north the mountains. Evidently it was designed they should not have neighbors. . . . While isolated, this land was also centrally located, central to the great nations of that time and later. It seems impossible that the Syria of today could ever have been the world's center. Yet this fact was morally true till the New Testament was written; and it remained geographically true till the discovery of America. . . . Syria lies also midway between two continents, Asia and Africa, as to belong exclusively to neither, while providing the communication between both. . . . **Thus this land of Israel, remarkable in its isolation is equally remarkable in its centralization.** [emphasis

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added, Jer.] It lies central to Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome, the great nations and civilizations of antiquity.²⁰

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 continents of Europe, Asia and Africa look like petals.²¹

Four reasons can be suggested for the uniqueness of Palestine as a contributor to Heaven's redemptive plan. First, Canaan was isolated by natural barriers from its regional neighbors. . . . Second, Palestine was a corridor of land trade routes connecting Europe, Asia Minor, and the East (Mesopotamia, etc.) with Egypt. . . . Third, the lush productivity of the land . . . Fourth, the great variety of geographical features characteristic of Canaan, together with its plants, animals, etc., made this land an ideal place from whence to produce much of the Scriptures, thus accommodating the Holy Writings to the understanding of people in all parts of the earth.²²

The name "Palestine" is said to have come from the phrase "Philistine land." Palestine includes land on both sides of the Jordan River. Its northern border is the Leontes River, Mount Lebanon and Mount Hermon. On the east, Palestine is bounded by the Syrian Desert. It is bordered by the River of Egypt (not the Nile River) and the Negeb on the south. Of course, the Mediterranean Sea forms the western border. Palestine is about one fourth

²⁰ *The New Analytical Bible and Dictionary of the Bible*, Chicago, John A. Dickson Publishing Co., c. 1973, p. 297.

²¹ Gary A. Rendsburg, "Reading David in Genesis," *Bible Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 17, No. 1, February 2001, p. 25.

²² Wayne Jackson, *Background Bible Study*, Montgomery, AL, Apologetics Press, Inc., p. 1.

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the size of Pennsylvania or about 12,000 square miles. Palestine is about 350 miles long by up to 60 miles wide.

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 climate of Palestine is dependent in part, of course, on its latitude, but chiefly on its local surroundings. . . . The line of latitude running through Jerusalem passes close to Savannah, Georgia, and a little south of Montgomery, Alabama, and of Jackson, Mississippi. Its temperature does not vary much from that of these localities, but its peculiar situation causes its climate in other respects to be quite different. Bounded on the south and the east by a vast desert, whose thirsty atmosphere absorbs all the moisture coming from distant seas, it can receive no rain from those directions. The same atmosphere spreads over Palestine itself, absorbing in summer all the vapor from the Mediterranean, so that the country receives no rain at all during the warmer season of the year. . . . During seven months of the year there is rarely a drop of rain, and never enough to lay the dust. . . . The remainder of the year, from November 1 to April 1, is the winter, or, more properly speaking, the rainy season; for the year is divided into but two seasons, a dry summer of seven months and a wet winter of five months. It is seldom cold enough to form ice on the uplands, and never on the lowlands. Snow is not often seen, and when it falls it usually melts rapidly away. . . . The cold is seldom severe enough to injure

Palestinian Coastal & Interior Plains

Along the Mediterranean coast of Palestine is a coastal plain except for where Mount Carmel stands. The plain south of Mt. Carmel bears two names respecting its arbitrary distinction as two plains.

It is divided into two parts, the Plain of Sharon and the Philistine Plain. These are distinguished, not by any natural boundary, nor by any distinct natural features, but merely by the names which they anciently bore. They really constitute but a single plain . . .²⁴

Between Mount Carmel and just south of the city of Joppa the coastal plain is six to 12 miles wide, 50 miles long and is called the Plain of Sharon; Jaffa Orange trees grow there. From a few miles below Joppa south to Gaza the coastal plain is called the Plain of Philistia, named after the Philistines who once lived there. It is nine miles wide in the north and 16 miles wide at its southern end and 40 miles long.

North of Mount Carmel the coastal plain is called the Plain of Accho. East of Mount Carmel, the Plain of Esdraelon (or Valley of Jezreel or Valley of Megiddo) links the coastal plain with the Jordan River Valley. The Plain of Esdraelon is a crossroads between places north, south and east; it is an important intersection in the fertile crescent. Therefore, it has been the scene of countless military battles over the centuries. This site is also the place of Armageddon of Revelation 16:16, though a figurative reference is intended there. There are about 25 layers of human occupation lying under the surface of

²³ McGarvey, pp. 45-46.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

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Megiddo.²⁵

The Plain of Jericho is north of the Dead Sea where the Jordan River Valley is its widest, about 18 miles. Nearby and east of the Dead Sea lies the Plain of Moab.

Shephelah

Low hills (1,000–1,200 feet high) between the coastal plain (parallel to the Plain of Philistia, but not parallel to the Plain of Sharon) and the Central Range of mountains are called the Shephelah. They formed a natural fence between the Philistines and the nation of Israel. When the Philistines were stronger, they lived in these hills, but when Israel was stronger, Israel lived there. The Philistine stronghold was in the coastal plain, and the stronghold of Israel was in the mountains.

Mountains

Between the low hills (Shephelah) and the Jordan River Valley were mountains, the Central Range. These mountains were the primary dwelling place of Israel and vary in height above sea level from 1,800 to 4,000 feet.

A series of mountains dot Palestine. The Lebanon Mountains run north and south on the west side of the Jordan River near its source. They average 7,000 feet above sea level; their highest peak is 10,200 feet.

Mount Zion was originally one of the four hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built. Later, the name “Zion” was applied to the other hills as well and to the city of Jerusalem.

Like a thumb on the sea coast, Mount Carmel rises 500 feet as it juts out toward the Mediterranean Sea. Its highest peak is over 1,700 feet. Here Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal; Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, altar and water in the ditch

²⁵ Bill Humble and others, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, Nashville, Christian Communications, p. 29.

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around the altar (1 Kings 18:17-40). McGarvey observed a spring on Mt. Carmel in 1879 that had an abundance of water despite the Kishon 1,400 feet below was dry.²⁶

Baal was the masculine Phoenician god, whereas Ashtoreth was the corresponding goddess.

Fertility goddess of the Canaanites, the Sidonians (Sidon) (1 Kgs. 11:5) and the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:10, where the name appears in the plural form, Ashtaroth). Ashtoreth is the counterpart of Baal, god of storm and fertilizing rain. . . . Thousands of Astarte figurines made of clay have been found at most of the excavated sites of the Canaanite and Israelite periods.²⁷

A limestone stele from the mid-second millennium B.C. depicts Baal with a lightning bolt in his hand. The conflict between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal was to determine, therefore, the identity of the true God — Jehovah or Baal. Elijah thus confronted king Ahab, a Baal worshipper, with this challenging message: “As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kgs. 17:1). The “god of weather” had his water cut off! Later, when Elijah met the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, a sacrifice was prepared; but Baal, with his lightning bolt, could not ignite it (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:25ff). In contrast, Elijah’s sacrifice, though drenched in water, was consumed by fire from heaven. Subsequently, the prophet of God ascended Mt. Carmel and prayed for rain. Over the Mediterranean, there arose a

²⁶ McGarvey, p. 309.

²⁷ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.*

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small cloud; presently “the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain” (1 Kgs. 18:45). This remarkable account cannot be fully appreciated without some knowledge of Baal worship and Palestinian weather conditions.²⁸

Mount Ebal (over 3,000 feet high) and Mount Gerizim (almost 3,000 feet high) are in Samaria. It was here Joshua had the law of Moses read before all the people after their conquest of Canaan. The cursings of the law were read from Mount Ebal; the blessings of the law were read from Mount Gerizim. McGarvey’s party experimented to discern how well Israel could hear the readings. They confirmed the biblical narrative regarding the reading of the blessings and cursing. They found

. . . a deep, semicircular recess in the face of Mount Ebal, and a corresponding one precisely opposite to it in Mount Gerizim. . . . As to the space included in the two amphitheatres, I think it ample to accommodate the six hundred thousand men with their families . . .²⁹

An altar of unhewn stones attributed to Joshua (8:3-31) has been uncovered on Mount Ebal.³⁰

Mount Gerizim also has a projection of rock called Jotham’s Rock overlooking the valley. It was from here that Jotham rebuked the Sechemites with his fable (Judges 9:6-21). McGarvey describes the location in *Lands of the Bible*.³¹

Mount Hermon stands about 9,200 feet and is in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains on the east side of the Jordan

²⁸ Jackson, *Bible Background Study*, pp. 14-15.

²⁹ McGarvey, pp. 507-508.

³⁰ “From Shattered Legs to Archaeological Surveying on Foot,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 22, No. 5, September-October 1996, p. 22.

³¹ McGarvey, p. 290; see also p. 509.

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River. Snow remains on its peaks all year round.

East of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee and north of the Yarmuk River to Damascus lies a large plateau called Bashan. It is about 2,000 feet above sea level. South of Bashan in the Transjordan is the fertile land called Gilead. Mt. Nebo is in Gilead. Mount Nebo is 12 miles east of the mouth of the Dead Sea. It was here that Moses died and was buried by God. In 1879, J.W. McGarvey evaluated the area and found what he believed was the only peak that answers to all the requirements indicated in Scripture (Deuteronomy 34).³² South of Gilead the Mountains of Moab line the eastern shore of the Dead Sea and rise to 3,000 feet.

Negeb

The Negeb is desert country south of Hebron, the central and southern parts of which are mountainous. The climate and terrain inhibited economic production, widespread settlement and even use for trade routes which skirted the area. In the rainy season plants thrive. However, in the hot summer it is dry and barren. The most prominent city there is Beersheba, the southern most city of Palestine.

Rivers & Lakes

From south of the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea the Jordan River Valley varies in width from two to 12 miles. On either side of the valley are steep cliffs. The mountains west of the Jordan are higher than those east of the river. Winding like a snake, the Jordan River weaves through semi-tropical jungle that once was the home of lions. This river is not navigable. Over 70 sites of human occupation are evident along the Jordan River.³³ Bridges did not span the Jordan River until Roman times. Before the use of

³² *Ibid.*, p. 372-374.

³³ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 41.

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bridges, some 54 fords were used to cross the river.³⁴

The most important river in Palestine is the Jordan. The Jordan River has its source near the city of Dan and Mount Hermon. Of three sources, the primary source of the Jordan is a spring that sends out a stream about 20 feet wide and 30 inches deep. Each of the sources of the Jordan River ultimately derive their water from snow melting on top of Mt. Hermon. Two tributaries also contribute to the Jordan River: the Yarmuk just south of the Sea of Galilee and farther south the Jabbok. From its source, the Jordan flows 40 miles to Lake Hula (or Lake Merom), 15 miles further to the Sea of Galilee and 65 more miles to the Dead Sea. However, because it winds like a snake, the water actually travels about 200 miles instead of the 65 miles between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.³⁵ It is five to 12 feet deep and 80 to 180 feet wide. In its travels it drops down hill 22 feet per mile for an overall drop exceeding 3,000 feet. It is no wonder the Jordan River drops so sharply since it feeds the lowest body of water on the face of the earth, the Dead Sea. The Jordan River Valley occupies a portion of a geological fault called el Ghor which extends from the Lebanon Mountains, through the Red Sea and deep into the continent of Africa.

In biblical times, a small lake occupied a part of the Jordan River system. Twelve miles from the city of Dan and 40 miles east of the Mediterranean Sea, Lake Hula was about 11 feet deep. It and the swamp land around it has been drained in recent years.

The pear shaped body of water south of Lake Hula has been called various names: Galilee, Chinnereth, Genesareth, Tiberias. It is up to 12½ miles long and seven and a half miles wide. The surface of the Sea of Galilee is 700 feet below sea level; the lake averages 12 feet deep but its deepest depth is 165 feet. Winds

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁵ Lewis, p. 111.

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funneling through the Jordan River Valley from the north can quickly agitate calm seas into threatening waves; remember an instance when Jesus and his apostles faced such a dangerous adventure on the Sea of Galilee (Luke 8:22-24). “When the cold currents of air from snow-capped Mt. Hermon **rush down** the narrow gorges of the Galilean hills into the deep depression of the Jordan Valley, thus colliding with the warm air rising from the surface of the lake, violent whirlwinds can suddenly whip the sea into a frenzy.”³⁶ “Some ten of the thirty-three recorded miracles of Jesus took place around this beautiful body of water.”³⁷

An unusually long drought in 1986 exposed some of the bottom of the Sea of Galilee. On January 24, “a boat dating approximately to the time of Jesus” was found resting in the mud.³⁸

The terminus of the Jordan River is the Dead Sea. The surface of the Dead Sea, also known as the Salt Sea, is the lowest body of water on the face of the earth. Its surface is about 1,300 feet below sea level and the Dead Sea is another 1,300 feet deep. The Dead Sea is 48 miles long by up to 10 miles wide. Being very hot in the area of the Dead Sea, water evaporates rapidly; the only natural escape for water in the Dead Sea is evaporation. Twenty-five percent of the water content is solid material, including a heavy concentration of salt. Ocean saltwater weighs 10¼ lb. per gallon, whereas Dead Sea saltwater weighs 12¼ lb. per gallon. Saltwater in the Dead Sea contains per gallon 3½ lb. minerals, 1 lb. common salt, 2 lb. magnesium and ½ lb. chloride of calcium (lime). Six and one half million gallons of this water flows into the Dead Sea daily, the only escape is evaporation. The density of the water causes the human body to bob in the

³⁶ Jackson, *Bible Background Study*, p. 15.

³⁷ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 47.

³⁸ Robert L. Hohlfelder, “The Sea of Galilee Boat,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 22, No. 5, September-October 1996, p. 67.

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surface like a cork.

“The water is bitter, distasteful, and oily to the touch.”³⁹ Marine and plant life, even salt water variety, find it impossible to live in the Dead Sea.

Seasoning in the biblical period was limited to salt (Job 6:6), obtained from the endless supply in the salt hills near the Dead Sea (Zeph. 2:9) and possibly also thanks to the evaporation of sea water along the Mediterranean coast. It was only in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods that most of the spices now known were brought from Arabia, India and eastern Africa.^{40 41}

Vespasian had some persons who could not swim bound and thrown into the Dead Sea to see for himself the reputed buoyancy of the lake. They all swam — virtually on top of the water — though their hands were tied behind their backs. Horses ridden into the Dead Sea flip over.

The Kishon River drains the Plain of Esdraelon and is also in the vicinity of Mt. Carmel. It was here that the prophets of Baal were slain following their confrontation with the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18:40). Previously during the time of the Judges, Jabin, Canaanite king of Hazor, oppressed the Israelite nation. Sisera, the captain of his army, and 900 chariots were defeated at the Kishon River (Judges 4-5).

Several often dry brooks that fill during the rainy

³⁹ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 36.

⁴⁰ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*.

⁴¹ See also, Ralph Gowers, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, Chicago, The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1987 [electronic book, page numbers not indicated].

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season are called wadis and flow into both the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, too. Other than the Jordan River, the next most important river to feed the Dead Sea is the Arnon.

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“The word ‘archaeology’ is a compound term deriving from two Greek roots, *archaios* (ancient) and *logos* (study of), so literally suggesting a study of the ancient.”⁴² Archaeology could be defined as “digging up the past.” Bible archaeology is when something unearthed is about the Bible, something mentioned in the Bible or Bible times. “Digging up the past” can help people today better understand several Bible related subjects: (1) Is the Bible an ancient writing? (2) Did the Bible really tell of events long before they happened? (3) What was life like in Bible times? Bible archaeology proves that the Bible is very old and is truthful. It also reveals how those to whom the Bible was originally given understood those messages.

The archaeologist, without claiming to have theological answers or solutions to literary problems, has the modest — but extremely important — task of keeping the Biblical interpreter in touch with the social, historical and cultural world of the past, which demands consideration by those of us who want to hear what the Biblical texts say to us today.⁴³

. . . Biblical archaeology deals, first and foremost, with the Biblical period, that is, with the Iron Age (1200-586 B.C.E.), mainly

⁴² Wayne Jackson, *Biblical Studies in Light of Archaeology*, Montgomery, Alabama, Apologetics Press, Inc., p. 1.

⁴³ Hershel Shanks, “Scholars Speak Out,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 21, No. 3, May-June 1995, p. 25.

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Iron Age II (1000-586 B.C.E.) and the Babylonian and Persian Period (586-332 B.C.E.).⁴⁴

Biblical archaeology continues to make significant contributions to the body of external evidence that confirms the Bible. Thereby, biblical archaeology reinforces the Bible-believer's confidence in the Divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. Further, biblical archaeology persuades unbelievers to more closely examine the Bible message.

Kenneth A. Kitchen's article in the 1995 March-April issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* presents several archaeological pieces of external evidence, summarized in the next several paragraphs.⁴⁵ First, he establishes a solid date—harmonious with both biblical text and archaeological discoveries—from which patriarchal and Jewish events can be dated confidently.

Kitchen associates the building of the city Rameses by Israelite slaves in Exodus 1:11 with archaeological discoveries of the same period. The Merneptah stela chronicles military interaction between Egypt and Israel in Canaan, at a time which according to history and the biblical text postdates the exodus. This agreement affords the Bible student and the true biblical archaeologist a glimpse backward into Patriarchy and forward into Judaism, for dating purposes.

An interesting piece of external evidence pertains to the price of slaves. Archaeological discoveries covering 2,000 years of history value slaves from a low of 10 shekels of silver to a high of 120 shekels of silver each. Various biblical references to the price of slaves correspond to the historical price of slaves in various periods (confirmed through archaeology). Accordingly,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁵ Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March-April 1995, pp. 48-57, 88, 90-95.

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Joseph was sold for 20 shekels of silver (Genesis 37:28). See also references to 30 shekels of silver (Exodus 21:32) and 50 shekels of silver (2 Kings 15:20) for the price of a slave. Had the account of Joseph been written during the Persian period instead of when it purports to have occurred, Joseph would have been sold for 90 or 100 shekels of silver.

Greatly simplified here, the complexities of comparing the differences between contracts throughout the centuries also attest to the reliability of the Bible. Contracts (covenants) that are recorded in the Old Testament (e.g., Genesis 14:13; 21:23-33; 26:29-31; 31:44-54; etc.) correspond to contracts of various historical periods identified through archaeology. This is another way that biblical chronology corresponds with biblical archaeology.

Add to the previous considerations that geographical-political alliances recorded in the Bible conform to the geography and governments discernible through archaeology. The specific Bible references detailing certain alliances may not be found through archaeology (e.g., Genesis 14), but the right names correspond to the right places and alliances typical of various historical periods.

Old Testament references to Egypt (e.g., contact with pharaohs by Abraham and later by Jacob) fit with the history of Egypt. Egyptian presence was in the right place at the right time to interact with God's people just as the Bible portrays. Biblical archaeology confirms this. Someone attempting to write patriarchal history out-of-time and pretending a much earlier date would be ill prepared to relate these facts correctly.

Further, the laws of inheritance differed from time to time throughout patriarchy and Judaism. Biblical references to inheritance laws (e.g., Genesis 49, equal distribution to sons; Deuteronomy 21:15-17, double portion for the oldest son) correspond to archaeological discoveries depicting inheritance laws in the respective

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historical periods.

Additionally, customs ascribed in the Bible to various peoples agree with archaeological evidence respecting the same periods. To the degree that customs differed from nation to nation and from generation to generation, the fabrication of histories by Bible writers and their assignment of their writings to earlier centuries would have been difficult to impossible. There is no reason to discount Bible narratives and not accept them as they represent themselves.

Since some Asian cultures have maintained accurate ancestral and narrative accounts for even a thousand years, similar Bible chronologies of family lines and events are very believable. This type of external evidence stands against the guesswork-scholarship of avowed enemies of the Bible.

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. 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.⁴⁶

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.⁴⁷

An earlier mention of Israel during the reign of

⁴⁶ Tammi Schneider, "Did King Jehu Kill His Own Family," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 1995 January-February, pp. 26-33, 80, 82.

⁴⁷ Bill Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, Nashville, Christian Communications, p. 19.

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Shalmaneser appears on another stela, the Kurkh Monolith. Inscribed hereon is that Ahab contributed 2,000 chariots and 10,000 soldiers to an alliance of kings that was attempting to resist the conquering armies of Shalmaneser.

References such as these are not contradicted by the Bible. The Bible just does not mention them. We do not expect the Bible to record every historical event and it does not (see this principle in John 20:30).

Archaeology shows that people have always used some form of writing. In the earliest writings, pictures told of man's deeds. This type of writing was used before the great flood of Noah's day; archaeologists have found stone tablets with picture writing that were written before the flood. Cities and palaces of the ancient world even maintained their own libraries with tens of thousands of inscribed tablets and stones.

Until recent years it was commonly believed that Writing was unknown in the early days of Old Testament history. This was one of the bases of the modern critical theory that some of the Old Testament books were written long after the events they describe, thus embodying only Oral Tradition. But now the spade of the archaeologist has revealed that WRITTEN records of important events were made from the dawn of history.⁴⁸

Evidence proves that the Bible could be written at the time in history and by the people it claims. Other archaeological discoveries confirm the truthfulness and accuracy of the Bible. There is every reason to believe the Bible is an ancient writing handed down by God.

Recent discovery of picture writing in Egypt, which predates Egyptian hieroglyphics, compares in antiquity with picture writing found at the head of the Persian

⁴⁸ Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1965, p. 45.

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Gulf.⁴⁹ These competing but comparable writing systems imply several significant points regarding the early human inhabitants of planet earth. One, though previously the earliest evidence of human civilization was discovered at the eastern end of the Fertile Crescent, human civilization at an early time was more widespread than first evident from archaeological finds. This, of course, conforms to the biblical narrative regarding the population of the earth by mankind.

The Tigris and Euphrates river valleys were home to the first people on earth. The ruins of man's earliest cities lie in this part of the world. These cities were made of brick. Garbage and broken bricks from destroyed buildings were used repeatedly as foundations to rebuild. Hundreds (even thousands) of years of destruction and rebuilding made a unique parfait of human history; each layer of earth holds clues to everyday life at the same site, but in different times and sometimes by different peoples. Through the various means of destruction visited on an ancient city site, and subsequent rebuilding, the hill or *tell* would “. . . grow upward, in many cases at the rate of about five feet per century.”⁵⁰ Twenty different cities may rest on the same place and rise 100 feet from the original level of the city. Broken pottery, tools, weapons, dried seeds and writings in every layer of earth tell something about the people who used those items.

The primary way in which archaeologists date the artifacts recovered from the mounds they excavate pertains to the recovered pottery.

As archaeologists excavate, they are concerned about dating their finds. One of the most useful ways of doing so involves study of the pottery found in each level. Down through the centuries there were

⁴⁹ “Ancient Tablets Show Egyptians Among First to Write,” *Herald-Star*, Steubenville, OH, December 16, 1998, p. 5c.

⁵⁰ Free and Vos, p. 17.

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changes in the shape, decoration, type of clay, style, and other features of ancient bowls, jars, and dishes.⁵¹

Radiocarbon Dating is another method of obtaining relative dates for archaeological finds. Only specimens that were once alive can be tested, but that information can be applied likewise to inanimate objects occupying the same strata. This dating method is based on assumptions regarding the rate that Carbon 14 decays (its half-life equal to 5,730 years).

This regular rate of decay allows scientists to determine the age of any organic (that is, once living) material. They compare the amount of carbon 14 remaining, say, in a gram of our papyrus scroll to the amount of carbon 14 in a gram of a living papyrus reed, and then they calculate how long it has taken for the scroll to lose so much carbon 14.⁵²

Some people began to doubt the truthfulness of the Bible; instead, they came to believe it is only a collection of stories and not true. However, archaeology has unearthed ancient cities and references to kingdoms previously unknown to modern man except in the Bible. Archaeology does not disprove, but unintentionally shows that the Bible is true in every case where both archaeology and the Bible speak about the same thing.

Since the New Testament revelation stands upon the foundation of the Old Testament, the accuracy of the Old Testament is of great importance to us. Although confirmation of one kind of truth (historical) does not demonstrate the validity of another kind of truth (theological), the veracity of the

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵² "Radiocarbon Dating," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 23, No. 3, May-June 1997, p. 17.

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historical narrative of Scripture lends credence to the theological message.⁵³

The Bible is much more than simply a thorough and reliable history book. It is an ancient volume that has been carefully preserved; writers called scribes made copies of the Bible throughout the generations of man's existence. The Bible also told of events (such as then future kingdoms and kings) which were to come; these prophecies did come true and prove the divine source of the Bible. From every examination, the Bible is reliable.

Bible Geography, Bible Archaeology and the Bible are friends; they tell the same story, only better than were it told by one of them alone. The study of the Bible comes alive when the people and events studied can be placed in their physical settings. Geography teaches about the lands and places where ancient people lived and famous events occurred; archaeology reveals **how** people lived in those places in those times and how Bible illustrations and messages were understood. All this helps the student today better understand God's Word; after all, we should simply want to understand the Bible as it was intended to be understood by those to whom it was originally spoken or written.

Archaeology is an interpretive science. However, if presented honestly and if not colored with a liberal bias, biblical archaeology never contradicts the Bible. Sometimes archaeological discoveries, though, depict events that are not specifically mentioned in the Bible. Further, the Bible records characters, places and events that have not been discovered by archaeologists. Yet, whenever the Bible and archaeology address the same things, they always concur.

The Bible is not a textbook on science, yet when it speaks of matters relating to science, it is accurate. The Scriptures, for example, do

⁵³ Free and Vos, p. 13.

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not claim to be, nor are they a treatise on astronomy, yet when Job speaks of the Bear (Job 38:32), he writes in accord with known astronomical facts. As has been said, "The Scriptures were written not primarily to tell us how the heavens go, but to tell us how to go to heaven." Yet the content of all Scripture is scientifically and historically accurate and the scientific and historical allusions of the Bible are constantly illuminated and confirmed by modern discoveries.⁵⁴

The external evidence of biblical archaeology is a fitting companion to biblical internal evidence.

Biblical archaeology has greatly enhanced the study of the Biblical texts and its history. Accuracy has been assured by the thorough way in which the natural and physical sciences have become essential partners in the excavations and in the interpretation of the finds. Biblical archaeology's greatest significance is that it has corroborated many historical records in the Bible.⁵⁵

External and internal evidences are unsurpassed faith-builders.

. . . numerous passages of the Bible that long puzzled the commentators have readily yielded up their meaning when new light from archaeological discoveries has been focused on them. . . . In addition to illuminating the Bible, archaeology has confirmed countless passages that have been rejected by critics as unhistorical or contradictory to known

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁵ Shanks, "Scholars Speak Out," p. 29.

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facts.⁵⁶

Archaeology also has given us the Bible whose credibility as a historical document is substantiated by a vast number of witnesses. In any court of law, witnesses divulge testimony that either exonerates or convicts. Even circumstantial evidence is sufficient to render a confident verdict. In the case of the Bible, thousands of witnesses in the form of manuscripts prove that the transition of the Bible text through the millenniums has been accurately conveyed.

Hort, the great New Testament scholar of the nineteenth century, pointed out that “only about one word in every thousand has upon it substantial variation supported by such evidence as to call out the efforts of the critic in deciding between the readings.” . . . The surviving Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts show very little variation. A careful scholar of an earlier generation, William Henry Green said, “The Hebrew manuscripts cannot compare with the New Testament either in antiquity or number, but they have been written with greater care and exhibit fewer various readings.” In regard to the accuracy of the text of the Old Testament, Green concluded, “It may be safely said that no other work of antiquity has been so accurately transmitted.”⁵⁷

Free and Vos quote another who made the following assessment regarding the reliability of the transmitted text of the Bible.

[O]n the whole such evidence as archaeology has afforded thus far, especially by providing additional and older manuscripts of the

⁵⁶ Free and Vos, p. 13.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

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books of the Bible, strengthens our confidence in the accuracy with which the text has been transmitted through the centuries. . . . they have also shown that not only the main substance of what has been written but even the words, aside from minor variations, have been transmitted with remarkable fidelity, so that there need be no doubt whatever regarding the teaching conveyed by them. Regarding what Amos, Isaiah, Jesus, or Paul thought and taught, our knowledge is neither increased nor altered by any of the manuscripts discovered.⁵⁸

Perhaps no other antique document is so well attested as the Bible. Even the *Dead Sea Scrolls* have neither displaced nor minimized the reliability of earlier biblical manuscripts that have served as the basis for the translation of our Bibles (i.e., the King James Version). The claim that new discoveries have invalidated in any way former translations, based on more recent discoveries of biblical manuscripts, is wholly without merit. Frankly, there is no archaeological justification for the doctrinal alteration of the Bible text that frequently is characteristic of more modern Bible translations.

Biblical archaeology already has contributed immeasurably to external evidences whereby confidence in the Bible can be legitimately fortified. However, fields of inquiry for the archaeologist's spade (and often very technologically sophisticated tools as well) are inexhaustible.

. . . half a million clay tablets that have already been excavated are yet to be read and appraised. It has been estimated that there are some five thousand ruin heaps in

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

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Palestine (including tells), only a few hundred of which have been excavated at all, and of these only about thirty have been the scenes of major digs. The Iraq Department of Antiquities has records of over 6,500 tells (mounds or buried cities) in the country; well over 6,000 of them have not yet been excavated at all.⁵⁹

Additionally, many Bible-relevant locations are virtually unexplored in modern nations that prohibit or hinder such excavations, including: Iran (Persia), Iraq (Mesopotamia, Babylon, Nineveh) and Saudi Arabia. Add to this the fact that mountains of evidence already extracted from the earth either have been incompletely evaluated or not yet reviewed at all. “A scholar could do years of archaeological work in the British Museum [alone] and never turn a spade of dirt!”⁶⁰

Unfortunately, most of what has been unearthed through archaeology also remains unpublished. Archaeologists or the groups overseeing them customarily control the initial and possibly subsequent publication of their finds. Due to death of archaeologists, lack of funding or inattention, perhaps most archaeological digs have not been published. Especially Bible believers are eager to know more about the biblical world.

Unless an excavation is “published” in this sense, the information that could be provided is lost forever; there is no way to repeat the experiment, to re-dig what has already been dug. Excavation is destruction; we allow it only because of the information that it makes available. When an excavation is not published, the justification for the destruction disappears. The failure to publish, quite simply, is tantamount to

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 293-294.

⁶⁰ Jackson, *Biblical Studies in Light of Archaeology*, p. 4.

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looting.⁶¹

The wealth of information potentially discernible through biblical archaeology is staggering to contemplate, especially in view of the immense contributions this science has already rendered and continues to make. We can expect more great finds and useful evidence, friendly to the Bible, for many decades ahead. The Bible student has nothing to fear from biblical archaeology when it is interpreted honestly and without bias.

⁶¹ Hershel Shanks, "Jerusalem 3000: A Yearlong Celebration," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 21, No. 6, November-December 1995, p. 26.

Chapter 3: Biblical Archaeology in Action

Archaeology is subject to a degree of conjecture because it is necessarily interwoven with human interpretation. It simply is not enough to dig up the past. Artifacts recovered from the earth must be evaluated and linked to a real or theorized juncture in history. Such an analysis is often hindered by the examiner's unintentional or even intentional bias. Therefore, it is little surprise that archaeological discovery is frequently enveloped with some discord.

To illustrate this problem, I present the following scenario to my classes at West Virginia School of Preaching.

The year is 3157 and I bring to class a time capsule recently discovered in a local excavation (Moundsville, WV). At one time the site where this was found was on the eastern bank of the Ohio River (whereas it has been under 63 feet of water for nearly 800 years). The capsule is four feet tall, 18 inches in diameter and cylindrical. It is made of a primitive metal called "galvanized" and has a lid with a handle. The most exciting find inside the capsule is an ancient weapon. It is in the shape of what once was called a "gun." The device has a pistol grip and is constructed of something called "plastic." At this late date, it is difficult to ascertain whether pushing a combination of buttons produced a hot or cold, fast or slow, stun or lethal force. The gun was apparently used for defense of one's personal habitat, since it

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utilized an antiquated form of energy called “electricity,” to which it had access through (and was confined to the reach of) a three-foot tail.

Described above, of course, is not a gun but rather a hand-held hairdryer. It was not found in a time capsule but a garbage can. The educated guess was faulty. While this may be an oversimplification, it, however, illustrates the interpretive nature of archaeology.

Despite some difficulty addressing an archaeological find definitively and with verifiable accuracy, there is a wealth of information available because of archaeology. One recent discovery was found not by sifting earth, but from a platform far above the earth (in outer space). Boston University scientist Farouk El-Baz used photos from satellites orbiting the earth and space Shuttle Imaging Radar to locate one of the lost rivers of the Garden of Eden.^{62 63}

In Kuwait, a dry riverbed (Wadi Al-Batin) cuts through limestone and appears to disappear into the desert of Saudi Arabia. Actually, the river ran underground along a fault line under the sand. From the Hyaz Mountains in Saudi Arabia, this river carried granite and basalt pebbles 650 miles northeast to deposit them at its delta in Kuwait near the Persian Gulf.

This lost river, once up to three miles wide, corresponds to biblical descriptions of the Pishon River associated with the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10-12).

“And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold;

⁶² James A. Sauer, “The River Runs Dry,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 22, No. 4, July-August 1996, pp. 52-54, 57, 64.

⁶³ Molly Dewsnap, “The Kuwait River,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 22, No. 4, July-August 1996, p. 55.

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And the gold of that land *is* good: there *is* bdellium and the onyx stone.”

The Cradle of Gold mine in Saudi Arabia is identified with the “good gold” respecting the land of Havilah and the Pishon in Genesis Two. This mine is also thought to be King Solomon’s mine (1 Kings 9:26-28).

Sauer, a self-described former skeptic, through studies on climate change, acknowledges that there are legitimate “. . . connections between the archaeological evidence and early Biblical traditions.”⁶⁴ By evaluating pollen in core samples taken from various sites at various depths in the Bible lands, Sauer determined that the whole region once supported dense plant life. Further, “. . . a global wet phase began around 7500 B.C.E. [before common era, substituted for and equal to B.C.]. This phase, though probably interrupted by some drier periods, was predominantly wet until at least 3500 B.C.E.”⁶⁵

These calculations correspond to the rise and fall of peoples, population shifts, famines and the biblical narrative.

In my opinion, the descriptions of the severe famines at the time of Joseph (Genesis 41-47) reflect this period of aridity. The famine reported at the time of Joseph is probably another accurate fragment of climatic memory reflected in the early Biblical traditions. If this is correct, we may place the patriarchal age sometime in the third millennium B.C.E.⁶⁶

References to “extraordinary memory on the part of the Biblical authors”⁶⁷ regarding “. . . memories of climatic

⁶⁴ Sauer, p. 52.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

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change and of early geography [that] seem so accurate . . .” are not by Sauer and others ascribed to divine inspiration, but to an early written record of human, oral tradition.⁶⁸ However, others exhibit greater confidence in the biblical record based on archaeological evidence.

Archaeology has been speaking so loudly of late that it is causing a decided reaction toward the conservative view. The theory that writing was unknown in Moses’ day is absolutely exploded. And every year there are being dug up in Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia, evidences, both in inscriptions and earth layers that the narratives of the Old Testament are true historical records. And “scholarship” is coming to have decidedly more respect for the tradition of Mosaic authorship.⁶⁹

Another uplifting article in the same issue of *BAR* concerns a pit into which Edomite cultic objects were thrown and purposely crushed with large rocks. If not the very action, at least this type of destruction of idolatrous objects in Canaan is associated with the reform of King Josiah of Judah (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34-35) in 621 B.C.⁷⁰

Old Biblical Archaeology (as opposed to New Biblical Archaeology) is vibrant, conservative and encouraging. The efforts and life-long labors of William F. Albright, Nelson Glueck and others are being revalidated, though reluctantly in many cases.⁷¹ The evidences of a universal flood found by Leonard Woolley are also being revalidated.

“At Ur, Leonard Woolley discovered an almost

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Halley, p. 56.

⁷⁰ Rudolf Cohen and Yigal Yisrael, “Smashing the Idols,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 22, No. 4, July-August 1996, pp. 40-51, 65.

⁷¹ Sauer, p. 52.

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3-meter-thick sterile layer [of clay] that he originally considered evidence of the Flood, though he eventually abandoned that viewpoint because the level in question dated too early. But other flood deposits were later found at higher levels at several sites.”^{72 73}

In conclusion, archaeology is dependent upon interpretation. Hence, there is flawed archaeology because of flawed interpretation. There is, though, also more reliable archaeology owing to more reasonable interpretation. Doubtless there are archaeological discoveries about which little can be said with certainty, because of historical details that have escaped us. Additionally, the saga of “conservative Vs. Liberal” that pervades politics and theology, affects archaeology, too.

Often Bible archaeology contributes to the body of external evidence that serves to independently corroborate the Bible. Joseph P. Free’s *Archaeology and Bible History* is one source of this type of evidence with which to fortify Christian faith. *Biblical Archaeology Review* publishes a mix of opposing articles that interpret archaeological discoveries in harmony with or antagonistic to the Bible. (Even authors who appear to favor the Bible with their interpretation of archaeological evidence, may not actually believe in a plenary, inerrant, inspired Bible. After he makes a good case for the discovery of the Pishon’s dry riverbed, James Sauer, in closing his article writes: “I do not mean to imply that the early Biblical stories are literally true.”)⁷⁴

Bible translations are reliable insofar as they are accurately translated from the original languages. Irrespective of the corruptness of a specific translation, we do not ordinarily despair. We are confident that by

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁷³ Molly Dewsnap, “The Ur Flood,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 22, No. 4, July-August 1996, p. 56.

⁷⁴ Sauer, p. 64.

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using a more reliable translation, or by analyzing the original languages for ourselves, that we can grasp the message that God intends mankind to have.

Similarly, archaeological interpretations that do not appear to favor the Bible should not cause us to despair. For instance, a city may be unearthed which is subsequently designated as a biblical site at which a certain calamity occurred (e.g., Jericho). Through interpretation (often contrary to a previous interpretation), a date may be assigned to certain archaeological evidence that conflicts with the biblical record. In many cases, there may be doubt regarding the biblical identity of a site; several sites may compete for recognition as the biblical site (e.g., Mt. Sinai).

Happily, biblical archaeology enhances understanding of biblical narratives. Archaeological evidence that can be analyzed with a high degree of certainty exonerates the Bible. Instances wherein archaeology appears to conflict with the Bible are often the result of questionable (liberal) archaeological interpretation or misrepresentation of Bible text. Archaeology in its purest form is an unfailing friend of the Bible. Christians have everything to gain and nothing to lose by an appeal to archaeology fairly exercised.

Chapter 4: New Biblical Archaeology

Not unlike hermeneutics which is being supplanted by the infamous “new hermeneutics,” biblical archaeology is being revamped with a “new” biblical archaeology. In both cases, the old, tried, proven and biblically defensible standards are being wholly undercut and discarded — by “scholars” who demonstrate their agnosticism or worse at every juncture.

Strangely, many “biblical archaeologists” today are openly enemies of the Bible. That being so, the term “biblical” should be dropped. Further, the propositions of both “new hermeneutics” and “new biblical archaeology” contradict the respective topics of hermeneutics and biblical archaeology.

James K. Hoffmier, a professor at Wheaton College, summarizes the perspective of new biblical archaeologists.

The result of their scholarly investigations has been that virtually all that the Bible has to say about the early history of Israel has been rejected . . . Gone are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua and now even David. The Egyptian sojourn and exodus stories, along with Sinai wanderings and Joshua’s military entry into Canaan, have been reduced to retrojections or inventions by later Biblical writers.⁷⁵

These and other biblical events, places and people are

⁷⁵ James K. Hoffmier, “Of Minimalists and Maximalists,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2, March-April 1995, p. 22.

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touted as “fictional.”⁷⁶ New biblical archaeologists picture “. . . the emergence of Israel from varied groups of pastoral nomads, sedentary farmers and possibly even urban families, mainly of local Canaanite origin.”⁷⁷ The Old Testament is equated with “superstition” and “folk religion.”⁷⁸

Alas, recent discoveries continue to bolster the mounds of archaeological evidence, which, in part, affect the biblical accuracy of patriarchal history. The biblical portrayal of the origin of Israel can no longer be summarily dismissed. Once more, the Bible has been exonerated by archaeological evidence.

Dozens of sites have been excavated, and as material and inscriptional remains have come to light and been analyzed, the patriarchal age has been illumined in a manner unbelievable. We now have texts by the literal tens of thousands contemporaneous with the period of Israel’s origins. Important among these are: the Mari texts of the eighteenth century (some 25,000), the Cappadocian texts of the nineteenth century (many thousands), thousands of documents of the First Dynasty of Babylon (nineteenth to sixteenth century), the Nuzi texts of the fifteenth century (several thousand), the Alalakh tablets of the seventeenth and fifteenth centuries, the Ras Shamra tablets (ca. fourteenth century, but containing much earlier material), the Execration Texts and other documents of Egyptian Middle Kingdom (twentieth to eighteenth century), as well as

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Shlomo Bunimovitz, “How Mute Stones Speak: Interpreting What We Dig Up,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2, March-April 1995, p. 67.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 96.

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many others. And to these must now be added the newly discovered Ebla texts from northern Syria (above 16,000) which, although they come from a still earlier period (ca. the mid-third millennium) and have not yet been published and analyzed, will undoubtedly cast much light on the question of Israel's origins. As the Middle Bronze Age (early second millennium) has emerged into the light of day it has become evident that the patriarchal narratives, far from being literary creations of monarchical times, contain many authentic reflections of a far earlier day, long before Israel came into being as a people.⁷⁹

However, the extra-biblical details needed to definitively verify the timeline of biblical patriarchy remain elusive. The nomadic characteristic of patriarchy was less friendly to written records and analysis of occupied sites than the same of the peoples among whom the patriarchs moved. Patriarchal history, though, now must be granted a degree of respectability without bias, pending possible further archaeological confirmation. Presently, biblical names depicted in biblical patriarchy conform to extra-biblical historical names. Yet, the archaeological record does not confirm the biblical characters – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, among others. Likewise, customs, legal codes, city names, etc. that in the Bible are ascribed to the patriarchal period conform to a real, historical timeline.

There is, though, a body of *circumstantial evidence* that contributes to the substantiation of the biblical assertion of the nation of Israel's emergence from slavery in Egypt.

Although there is no direct witness in Egyptian records to Israel's presence in Egypt, the Biblical tradition a priori demands

⁷⁹ Bright.

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belief. It is not the sort of tradition any people would invent! Here is no heroic epic of migration, but the recollection of shameful servitude from which only the power of God brought deliverance. A number of factors lend objective support. Egyptian names prevalent in early Israel, especially in the tribe of Levi, certainly argue for a connection with Egypt. Among these are those of Moses himself, Hophni, Phinehas, Merari, and possibly Aaron and others. This evidence is not to be discounted. Certainly great numbers of Semites were present in Egypt throughout this period. The northeastern Delta, in particular, seems to have been filled with them. As was mentioned above, hundreds of Semitic words entered the Egyptian language . . . In any case, the tradition of bondage in Egypt is unimpeachable. . . . Of the exodus itself we have no extra-Biblical evidence. But the Bible's own witness is so impressive as to leave little doubt that some such remarkable deliverance took place. Israel remembered the exodus for all time to come as the constitutive event that had called her into being as a people. It stood at the center of her faith from the beginning onward, as is witnessed by her most ancient poems (Ex. 15:1-18), by confession-like pieces probably likewise of quite ancient origin (Deut. 6:20-25; 26:5-10; Josh. 24:2-13), as well as by other texts too numerous to list, down to the end of the Biblical period—and beyond. A belief so ancient and so entrenched will admit of no explanation save that Israel actually escaped from Egypt to the accompaniment of

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events so stupendous that they were impressed forever on her memory.⁸⁰

New biblical archaeologists **do not** believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God (at least not by the ordinary definitions to which we subscribe). Therefore, they are predisposed **not** to find correlation between archaeological discoveries and the Bible. Of course, new biblical archaeologists accuse “old” biblical archaeologists of being predisposed to find correlations between archaeological discoveries and the Bible — even if they must forge those comparisons. God’s Word does not require fraudulently devised external evidences to defend it. However, legitimate external evidences of the Bible’s veracity — which may be uncovered through biblical archaeology — deserve fair consideration.

Archaeology as a science, like other sciences, consists of drawing conclusions from raw data. Interpretation of the data is only as reliable as the underlying method of deduction employed. New biblical archaeologists use the “Historical-Critical Method” of interpretation which precludes as historically accurate the first occurrence of any event and any event that purports Divine intervention. Therefore, new biblical archaeologists are predisposed to relegate the Bible to historical inaccuracy at the onset.

The Historical-Critical Method of interpretation is also highly subjective, dependent on past human experience to explain, verify or reject any set of circumstances under consideration. Essentially, if something is not now known to be occurring, it is viewed as never having happened. This is the same ditch into which other scientists fall regarding the existence of matter and life, resulting in the widespread adoption of evolution over creation. Science of all types possesses inherent limitations due to its inability to demonstrate its most popular theories under the controlled conditions of the laboratory. Garry K. Brantley

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

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devotes a scholarly book, *Digging For Answers: Has Archaeology Disproved the Bible?*, to the problems of interpreting archaeological data, especially as it pertains to the Historical-Critical Method.

Consequently, the same archaeological data interpreted at different times by different persons results in conflicting assessments. Whereas one archaeologist trumpets that a find corroborates biblical text, another exclaims instead that either the information has no bearing on or outright challenges biblical statements.

Brantley cites an example of the destructive application of the Historical-Critical Method to biblical archaeology regarding Jericho. John Garstang excavated Jericho and determined that it was destroyed according to the biblical account in the Book of Joshua. Later employing the Historical-Critical Method, Kathleen Kenyon countermanded Garstang's interpretation of the archaeological evidence and denied any correspondence to the destruction of the city by the Israelite nation per Joshua. More recently, Garstang's analysis has been exonerated, though new biblical archaeologists persist in categorically incorrectly dating the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and entrance into Canaan.⁸¹

John H. Morison, Professor of New Testament Studies and Winn Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Harvard Divinity School, author and Lutheran minister, has a loathsome view of God's Word. In an article in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, he: (1) shudders at the thought

. . . that the Hebrew Bible . . . can be understood properly by both Jews and Christians only if it is acknowledged that its ultimate meaning is seen as a prophecy for the fulfillment in Jesus Christ. . . that all Jews should be converted to Christianity. . . there is neither a historical nor a theological

⁸¹ Garry K. Brantley, *Digging For Answers: Has Archaeology Disproved the Bible?*, pp. 40-41.

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justification for such claims.⁸²

(2) Morison quotes a fellow Harvard colleague and proceeds to defend the statement: “Both the canon of the New Testament and the Mishnah are a tragic historical mistake.”⁸³ He adds:

It is a simple historical fact that Jesus was an Israelite from Galilee, and that he understood himself to be nothing else but a prophet in Israel and for Israel — a venerable tradition, and he was not the first of these prophets of Israel who was rejected and persecuted — though he was tried and executed by the Romans, not by the Jewish authorities.⁸⁴

(3) According to Morison, Christianity and modern Judaism resulted from an unauthorized disruption in Judaism. A new religion (Christianity) was never intended by God or the apostles. “The Pharisee Paul,” though he did not envision a new religious group, through his teaching inadvertently drove a wedge between Jews and Jewish-Gentile groups — by which “the heirs of the Pharisaic tradition” caused two distinct groups to form: Jews and Christians.⁸⁵

Even the editor of the magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review* is critical of “belief in the inerrancy of the Bible.”⁸⁶ Four sentences within two paragraphs by another renown archaeologist show the link between new archaeology and new hermeneutics —which produces liberal theology.

I think that it is time for us to stop fooling the

⁸² John H. Morison, “Historic Mistakes Haunt the Relationship of Christianity and Judaism,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2, March-April 1995, p. 26.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

⁸⁶ Hershel Shanks, “A Short History of BAR,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2, March-April 1995, p. 38.

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people, making them think that there is just one Bible and that *our* Bible committee got closer to it than *their* committee did. . . . Must we continue to pretend that only our group is right denominationally and others are not right, and it is just too bad about others? . . . The Hebrew text is still in the process of standardization, but I wonder if it would not be proper for there to be an effort afoot to provide our people with the differences where they exist and let them see that there have been differences all along. I have been told by some that that would just destroy the Bible because lay folk still want to think of the Bible as somehow “inerrant.”⁸⁷

Funny, if it were not so tragic, biblical archaeology has become the very thing that when it initially came forth it was intended to counteract. Biblical archaeology sprang from Palestinian archaeology as a calculated effort to offset German “higher criticism” of the Bible.

Archaeologists working in Palestine between the end of the 19th century and the First World War are generally regarded as the “Founding Fathers” of Biblical archaeology. . . . The “Golden Age” of Palestinian archaeology — the period between the two World Wars — was dominated by American-style “Biblical archaeology” as championed by William Foxwell Albright and his disciples.⁸⁸

J.W. McGarvey was one valiant opponent of higher criticism. His book, *Lands of the Bible*, is an enduring testimony of his appeal to external evidence with which to confirm the Bible against liberal German theology.

⁸⁷ James A. Sanders, “Understanding the Development of the Biblical Text,” *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Forty Years*, pp. 70-71.

⁸⁸ Bunimovitz, pp. 60-61.

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However, a new generation of scholars in “the 1960s and early 1970s” arose which dubbed themselves *new biblical archaeologists*. They dismissed the archaeological work of their predecessors as “simplistic” or otherwise faulty. Former biblical archaeologists were ridiculed for engaging in circular reasoning for their acceptance of “. . . both archaeology and the Bible as essentially trustworthy sources of historical information.”⁸⁹

Archaeologists are accompanied in the digs by “geologists, paleobotanists, zoologists, anthropologists, soil scientists, climatologists, etc.”⁹⁰ and apparently evolutionists (“. . . we found evidence of early man’s settlement in the Arabian Peninsula nearly a million years ago.”)⁹¹

Traditionally, archaeologists have used trowel, small pick and a brush to excavate. (Some doubtful archaeologists who may have been more treasure hunters have sometimes resorted to dynamite and bulldozers.) Some of the more modern equipment in use today includes surveying equipment, cameras and computers. Even radar has been pressed into service as an archaeological tool.

Ground penetrating radar (GPR) — This sophisticated technology, an outgrowth of space exploration, is a relatively new — and expensive — addition to the archaeologist’s arsenal. It operates on the same principle as police radar . . . In archaeology GPR is used not only to locate buried features such as walls, tombs and cisterns, but also to detect changes in soil layers or cavities in rocks. GPR does not replace digging, however, because it helps only in locating — but not

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 62.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁹¹ Hamid Abu Duruk, “Archaeology Thriving in Saudi Arabia,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2, March-April 1995, p. 73.

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identifying — features. Ground scanning helps archaeologists concentrate on the area where maximum results are likely to be achieved. While they do not replace actual excavations, GPR and related high-tech tools maximize the yield. Archaeologists who do not have the benefit of GPR must rely on the older methods of digging probes and test pits.⁹²

Other contemporary technology, “GDT uses sound waves to detect underground anomalies and translates them into images on a computer screen.”⁹³

Together, these specialists collaborate to render interpretations regarding biblical archaeology. These interpretations are naturally subject to whatever presuppositions that the archaeologists may have. Consequently, new biblical archaeologists are promoters of humanistic depiction of man’s past, present and future. They tend to destroy the Bible as God’s Word and encourage an ecumenical, liberal theology. Personally, were I to adopt what new biblical archaeologists have to offer, I would not be anything religiously. I would be a confirmed atheist.

Fortunately, though in the minority, there are still *old* biblical archaeologists. They still do revere God’s Word and are willing to make correlation between archaeology and the Bible where those comparisons legitimately exist. Happily, there are numerous archaeological proofs that serve as external evidence to the truthfulness of the Bible. Finally and remarkably, no archaeological discoveries have been unearthed which contradict the Bible.

⁹² Oded Borowski, “Tools of the Archaeological Trade,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 21, No. 1, January-February 1995, p. 68.

⁹³ Thomas E. Levy, “From Camels to Computers,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 21, No. 4, July-August 1995, p. 49.

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“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24).

Chapter 5: From the Beginning

The Beginning

On a time-line, the beginning or creation occurred, according to considerations in the biblical text, at about 4004 B.C. Essentially, then, we live about 6,000 years after creation. Despite claims by atheistic and theistic evolutionists, true science also supports a comparatively young *earth* of not more than 10,000 years.

Interestingly, the Babylonian Creation Tablets contain similarities and dissimilarities to the biblical account of creation. 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.

The dissimilarities overshadow the similarities. The sixth tablet corresponds to the sixth day of creation regarding the creation of mankind, and the seventh tablet corresponds to the number of days in the biblical account that depict the creation. The biblical account of monotheism is displaced in the Babylonian version with polytheism and the Babylonian account also incorporates mythological fantasies. Nevertheless, the ancient ascription of the physical universe to creation is compatible with the ancient biblical explanation for the existence of the physical universe (e.g., by creation Vs. evolution's Big Bang, etc.).

Patriarchy

“Patriarchy” is a compound word meaning “father”

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and “rule.” This word represents the first period of man’s religious history and describes how God first governed mankind—through the fathers of their respective families. God ruled through the fathers who in turn ruled their families.

Patriarchy was, therefore, a family-type religion. Judaism, which was given to Israel (the Jews) in the time of Moses, was a national-type religion; and, the Gospel of Christ which we have today is a universal-type religion. For many years Judaism and Patriarchy were both in force, one for the Jews and the other for non-Jews. However, now the Gospel is the only religion given by God for all men everywhere. In contradistinction to other world religions prevalent throughout the biblical narrative, patriarchy, Judaism and the Gospel were monotheistic. A notable but short-lived exception to the popular polytheism of the nations surrounding God’s people occurred in Egypt.

Amenophis IV (Akhenaten) . . . In any event, we must record the fact that less than a century before Moses a religion of monotheistic character had emerged in Egypt. . . . Yet, in that Aten was hailed as the sole god, creator of all things, beside (or like) whom is no other, one must say that the Aten cult was at least something closely approximating a monotheism.⁹⁴

Adam & Eve

Under Patriarchy, God spoke directly to the heads of families. The first family to whom God spoke was that of Adam and Eve. After God created all things, including the first couple, and placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he gave them instructions. (1) Populate the earth, (2) Exercise rule over the earth (Genesis 1:28), (3) Care for

⁹⁴ Bright.

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the Garden of Eden and (4) Not to eat the fruit of a certain tree (Genesis 2:15-17).

The last command, of course, Adam and Even failed to obey. 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.⁹⁵ 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.

Though we are certainly not dependent upon the findings of the archaeologists for our belief in the divine origin of man, it is encouraging to know that the spade has become a willing witness for the credibility of the Scriptures in this connection.⁹⁶

It is apparent that God continued to give instruction to Adam and his family even after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden for their sins. Among other evidences, through Abel one sees the sacrifice of animals which God required throughout Patriarchy, Judaism and in a sense in the Gospel Age too (through the death of Christ on the cross). (Abel worshipped according to faith, which faith results only from the Word of God, Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17.)

Though no one knows exactly where the Garden of Eden was located, it appears certain it was in the Fertile Crescent not far from the Persian Gulf. Four rivers, two of which can still be found today, watered Eden (Genesis 2:10-14).

The Tigris River has its source high in the Taurus Mountains. This river was also known as the Hiddekel. It flows southeast 1,150 miles before merging with the Euphrates River. From this junction, they flow together to

⁹⁵ Free and Vos, p. 33.

⁹⁶ Jackson, *Biblical Studies in Light of Archaeology*, p. 9.

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the Persian Gulf about 100 miles away.

The Euphrates River begins high in the mountains of modern Turkey and travels 1,675 miles southeast before joining the Tigris River. Known from that point onward to the Persian Gulf as the Shatt al Arab, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flow as one the final 100 miles.

Not only were these two rivers the primary sources of water for the Garden of Eden, they also contributed most of the water responsible for the so-called “Fertile Crescent.” This rainbow shaped piece of land extended from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea; north of it are mountains; south of it is desert.

On the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers the first civilizations were established. Man’s earliest history has been unearthed through archaeology in this part of the world. Recently though, civilization in Egypt, complete with an independent picture writing system that predated hieroglyphics, was discovered. This corresponds to the Bible’s representation of early man spreading over the known world from near the time of man’s placement on earth by God and again following the Flood.

The two earliest known civilizations, centered respectively in Egypt and near the Persian Gulf, expanded toward each other. Essentially, the earliest human civilizations mushroomed at opposite poles of the Fertile Crescent and moved toward each other. Palestine, however, stood between them and suffered the brunt of the struggle for dominance initially – and later suffered the same from conquests from the north and west (e.g., Hittites, Greeks, Romans). “Palestine is the land bridge between the Mesopotamian and the Nile valleys where early civilizations developed; it is also a halfway point between the Hittites in the north and the Arabians in the south.”⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Lewis, p. 72.

Noah

Noah was born a little over 1,000 years after the creation. Six hundred years later, Noah, his wife, three sons and their three wives and a sampling of all animal life escaped the world of sin on the ark. Between the creation and the Great Flood, mankind became very wicked. God destroyed the world with a universal flood because of man's great wickedness and much violence by both man and beast (Genesis 6:6-13). God showed displeasure toward both man and animal life (Genesis 6:7).

Due to knowledge regarding the cubit (18 inches) and noting the instructions of God to build the ark (Genesis 6:15-16), the size of the ark can be determined.

. . . a displacement of 43,000 tons. This would be just a little smaller than the largest of the pre-World War II Italian liners, the *Rex*, which had a displacement of about fifty thousand tons. By way of comparison, the *Queen Elizabeth*, built after the war had a displacement of 83,673 tons.⁹⁸

Noah's ark was large enough to accommodate both the human and animal passengers.

Some students of the Bible believe dinosaurs roamed the earth between Creation and the Flood.

There is considerable controversy among Bible scholars as to the identification of "behemoth" and "leviathan" in Job, chapters 40 and 41. . . . behemoth might be a species of **dinosaur**.⁹⁹

The violence and corruptness attributed to both man and animals and God's displeasure toward both is consistent with the existence of dinosaurs during this period.

⁹⁸ Free and Vos, p. 39.

⁹⁹ Jackson, *Bible Background Study*, p. 71.

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Archaeology confirms the co-existence of dinosaurs and man despite denials by evolutionists. Also of possible significance, some reptiles continue to grow as long as they live. Since life spans were several hundred years long before the flood, dinosaurs may have been nothing more than oversized reptiles. Archaeology reveals at least some dinosaurs died in a catastrophe (such as those found frozen). The universal Flood was a sufficiently large catastrophe to destroy all dinosaurs as well as all other animal life along with mankind.

Finally, the flood began to decline and the ark came to rest in the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4). The international boundary of the former Soviet Union and Turkey crosses through these mountains which lie between the Caspian and Black Seas. The exact location of the ark is still unknown. A Greek historian who lived about 290 B.C. claimed that the ark had been found. "Berosus states that in his time the remains of a ship were to be seen on top of the Kurdish mountains."¹⁰⁰ Claims and purported evidence that Noah's ark has been found are unsubstantiated. However, that has not prevented the sale of popular books to a naive "Christian" market.

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).¹⁰¹

The Bible tells of it; the ancient Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh tells of it: a terrible deluge left the whole earth under water.¹⁰²

Additional to the Bible's record, ancient history more

¹⁰⁰ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.*

¹⁰¹ Free and Vos, p. 194.

¹⁰² "Evidence of the Great Flood?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 23, No. 2, March-April 1997, p. 10.

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recently come to light, then, corroborates biblical history.

Among archaeological discoveries that may be related to the universal flood is new information gleaned from the Black Sea.

A research team headed by William B.F. Ryan and Walter C. Pittman, geologists with Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, reports that 7,500 years ago sea levels rose dramatically and salt water cascaded through the narrow Bosphorus strait into the Black Sea, which was then a freshwater lake. Using seismic evidence, sediment cores and freshwater fossils, the geologists have traced the shores of the old lake, according to a report in the *New York Times*. The scientists determined that the Black Sea's water levels rose about 500 feet, perhaps in only a matter of months. The quickly rising waters then submerged over 60,000 square miles of land.¹⁰³

The time-frame and rapid rise of sea level correspond to the biblical account of the flood. However, more than even a substantial rise of 500 feet would be necessary to completely agree with the biblical account of that worldwide deluge. Yet, the information is intriguing and contributes to the body of external evidence regarding the Bible.

Tower of Babel

Genesis 11:1-9 records the building of the Tower of Babel and God's displeasure with that human activity. (The Greek form for "Babel" is "Babylon" and identifies the site of the great city-state Babylon elsewhere addressed in Scripture.)

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

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The story of the Tower of Babel is told in Genesis (11:1–9). This building is generally identified with the ziggurat, the tower which rises in the center of the court of the Temple of Marduk.¹⁰⁴

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.¹⁰⁵

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.

The Behistun Rock contains an inscription on its face about 400 feet above a road below. Darius caused a chronicle of his military triumphs to be carved there in about 516 B.C. “This inscription gave a long account, in Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian languages, of the conquests of Darius.”¹⁰⁶ Through knowledge of Persian, the other two languages were deciphered.

Abraham

Several generations after the Flood, God called on a

¹⁰⁴ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.*

¹⁰⁵ Free and Vos, p. 41.

¹⁰⁶ Halley, p. 43.

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righteous man named Abram; later God renamed him Abraham. God instructed Abram to leave his home; he became a wanderer between his former home near the Persian Gulf and Egypt.

Ur was a chief city on the Euphrates River in the Fertile Crescent 130 miles north of the Persian Gulf. It was here that Abram was born and reared (Genesis 11:27-30). "While now located fifteen miles from the Euphrates and out in the desert, Ur is thought to have once been on the river and to have had an estimated population of 250,000 people."¹⁰⁷

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."¹⁰⁸ Ur itself had a population of about 34,000 with about 250,000 inhabitants in the surrounding area.¹⁰⁹

Again, except for our modern advancements, housing in Ur was not substandard either.

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

¹⁰⁷ Lewis, p. 77.

¹⁰⁸ Free and Vos, pp. 46-47.

¹⁰⁹ Jackson, *Biblical Studies in Light of Archaeology*, p. 10.

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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.¹¹⁰

A drain was located in the corner of the foyer where a basin and water would be placed for washing feet.¹¹¹

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 and Sarah lived at Ur . . .¹¹²

Terah moved along with his son and daughter-in-law, Abram and Sarai, and his grandson, Lot, to Haran. This city was on a tributary to the Euphrates River about 60 miles north of the Euphrates and about 600 miles northwest of Ur. Haran was in northern Mesopotamia (land between the rivers) on a caravan route between Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine and Egypt. The topography of Mesopotamia is marked by a leisurely ascent from the shore of the Persian Gulf to a height of 1,000 feet at Haran.

Terah planned to travel later to Canaan but died in

¹¹⁰ Free and Vos, p. 46.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹¹² Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, pp. 12-13.

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Haran. While at Haran, God instructed Abram to leave Haran and his father's house; so, Abram, his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot gathered their possessions and departed.

Mesopotamia means land between the rivers; the rivers meant are the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Mesopotamia included the right half of the arch that makes the Fertile Crescent. Ur was at the southeastern edge of Mesopotamia, whereas Haran is still at the northwestern edge. This stretch of land and often the larger Fertile Crescent too were controlled at various times by many different peoples (including Babylon and Assyria). Much later, Abraham sent his servant to Mesopotamia to bring back Rebekah to marry Isaac (Genesis 24:10).

After the death of Terah, God sent Abram to Canaan. He took with him Sarai, Lot, great possessions and many servants (Genesis 12:1-5). Canaan was the land of Palestine west of the Jordan.

The Lord appeared to Abram in Shechem in Canaan (Genesis 12:6). It was a walled town in the hill country later given to the tribe of Ephraim. Shechem was in the valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim.

Since this pass gave the only access from east to west into the mountains of Ephraim, and was situated on the main road from the north to the south, it was of strategic importance.¹¹³

Shechem under Joshua later was made one of the cities of refuge (Joshua 24:32). It was here, too, that Joshua made his last plea with Israel to serve God faithfully (Joshua 24:15-16).

In Genesis 12:1-3, God made three promises to Abram: (1) land, (2) posterity, (3) spiritual blessings for all humanity. God elaborated on this promise afterward in

¹¹³ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 63.

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Genesis 15 to include assurance that he would have a son through whom Abram would have numberless descendants. In Genesis 16, Abram and Sarai, very old, seek to help God fulfill this promise through a surrogate mother (Hagar) for Abram's offspring. In so doing, they resorted to humanly devised law with which they were familiar instead of to Divine law.

The Code of Hammurabi indicates that in Babylonia a wife might give a servant as a secondary wife to her husband in order to have children by the servant girl.¹¹⁴

Abram camped near the town of Bethel (Genesis 12:8). This city was about 12 miles north of Jerusalem.

Because of famine in Canaan, Abram went to Egypt (Genesis 12:10). Upon entering Egypt Abram and Sarai agreed to lie, saying Sarai was Abram's sister (verses 11-13). Sometimes the servants of God also sin, for which they must repent.

Critics of the Bible claimed that foreigners were not permitted in Egypt during the period the biblical narrative indicates that Abraham journeyed to Egypt. However, archaeology has yielded proof otherwise. First, a tomb painting in Beni Hassan portrays 37 Semites entering Egypt to transact trade about 2000 B.C. Second, foreigners established themselves as kings over the Egyptians in about 1900 B.C. These were the Hyksos rulers who were still commanding Egypt when Joseph rose from prison to power and later invited his family into Goshen. Further, Egypt enjoyed commercial intercourse from well before Abraham visited Egypt with peoples as far away as Mesopotamia.

. . . we have evidence of a period of international contact and cultural transfusion between the extremities of the Bible world before the sun of history rose.

¹¹⁴ Free and Vos, p. 54.

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Though contact with Mesopotamia seems virtually to have ceased by the time of the First Dynasty (twenty-ninth century or before), Egypt maintained contacts with Palestine and Phoenicia that were seldom broken through the centuries to come.¹¹⁵

Critics have also asserted that the Bible errs in citing camels in connection with Abraham's visit to Egypt (Genesis 12:16). Once more, the evidence refutes the critic.

A study of archaeological material, however, reveals a knowledge of the camel in Egypt even before the time of Abraham. Archaeological evidence showing early knowledge of the camel in Egypt includes statuettes and figurines of camels, plaques bearing representations of camels, rock carvings and drawings, camel bones, a camel skull, and a camel hair rope. These objects, some twenty in number, range from the seventh century B.C. back to the period before 3000 B.C. In recent years numerous indications of the domestication and use of the camel in Mesopotamia and Syria during the patriarchal period have come to light.¹¹⁶

Abram and Lot returned from Egypt to Bethel, but the land could not support the herds of both men. Lot chose the choice land near the evil city of Sodom (Genesis 13:5-13). Sodom, later destroyed by God, is thought to lie in ruins under the southern end of the Dead Sea.

Lot was taken captive when the city of Sodom was plundered (Genesis 14:14). Abram armed himself and his servants and pursued Lot's captors first to the city of Dan. This city marked the northern boundary of Canaan

¹¹⁵ Bright.

¹¹⁶ Free and Vos, p. 51.

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after its occupation by Israel many years later.

Abram followed the captors to the city of Hobath near the city of Damascus (Genesis 14:15). Damascus is on what were anciently called the Abanah and Pharpar rivers.

Damascus 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 seaport of Damascus was sometimes Tripolis, sometimes Beirut, 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.¹¹⁷

Water determined not only the location of settlements but also the trade routes from

¹¹⁷ Merrill F. Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans of Damascus*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1980, pp. 33-35.

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one center to another. One did not take the more direct route from Babylon to Jerusalem across the desert.¹¹⁸

Here Lot was freed. Damascus is reputed to be the oldest continually inhabited city in the world (Genesis 14:15; 15:2). Therefore, Damascus “has never been excavated”¹¹⁹

Some have doubted that the great distances traveled by Abraham and ascribed to him in the Bible were representative of mankind in the Patriarchal period. Amusing and telling is the equivalent of an ancient *U-Haul* contract for the rental of a wagon. It indicates that great distances were not a serious impediment to travel under Patriarchy.

Evidence concerning ancient travel in the days of Abraham has been discovered in a clay tablet found in Babylonia, and also in another group of tablets found at the edge of present-day Syria at the site of the ancient city of Mari. The Babylonian tablet contains a contract stipulating that a wagon was rented on condition that it *not* be driven over to the Mediterranean coastlands. It shows that in the days of Abraham travel from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean was so common that when a person rented a wagon he ran the risk of having it worn out by being driven several hundred miles to the seacoast in the vicinity of Syria and Palestine.¹²⁰

Upon his return after these battles, Abram met Melchizedek king of Salem (later called Jerusalem, Genesis 14:18). It was the home of the Jebusites until the time of King David when it was captured and made the capital of Israel.

¹¹⁸ Lewis, pp. 71-72.

¹¹⁹ Unger, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁰ Free and Vos, p. 53.

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The Plain of Mamre, later known as Hebron, became home to Abram (Genesis 13:18; 18:1). Hebron was in the hill country of Judah. It sits at 3,040 feet above sea level, making the city the highest in Israel.¹²¹ Hebron was David's capital for the first seven years of his reign. Abraham bought a burial plot near Hebron. It was at Hebron that God formalized his covenant of three promises with Abraham and the sign of this covenant was circumcision.

Archaeological discoveries show that the practice of circumcision can be traced back to the days of Abraham. This surgical operation is pictured on the Egyptian reliefs that go back into Old Testament times. Ancient burials in Egypt contain bodies that give evidence of circumcision, further showing the early establishment of this practice.¹²²

The Megiddo Ivories (dated about 2300 B.C.) depict naked, circumcised prisoners being marched along. These also establish the early date of circumcision and may show captured Hebrews.

Gerar was a city in southern Canaan inhabited by Philistines. It was here Abraham told the lie again about Sarah not being his wife (Genesis 20:1-2). Genesis 21 records the birth of Isaac in fulfillment of God's promise of a child to Abraham and Sarah.

Beersheba is the southern most city in the land of Canaan (Judges 20:1). It was at Beersheba that Abraham dug a well and planted a grove of trees (Genesis 21:25-34). J.W. McGarvey supposed that in 1879 he viewed the same wells that Abraham dug, the rocks of which at the top were level with the ground and grooved with the friction of ropes over the thousands of years.

It awakens emotions to be experienced but

¹²¹ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 13.

¹²² Free and Vos, pp. 54-55.

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once in a lifetime to draw and drink water from a well which Abraham dug, and from which he and his family drank, nearly four thousand years ago.¹²³

God called upon Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice at Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22:1-2). Mt. Moriah is one of the four hills on which Jerusalem was built.

Abraham received promises of God which were more fully realized by his descendants. Abraham himself owned only the Cave of Machpelah at Hebron which he purchased for a burial site.

When Abraham paid for the cave, he weighed out four hundred shekels of silver (Genesis 23:16). This shows that money was measured by weight in those days and was not yet coined. . . . Thus the implication that the shekel was a weight rather than a coin in the days of Abraham is another indication of the early date of the record concerning Abraham's purchase of Machpelah. . . . Abraham's ability to produce four hundred shekels of silver for the purchase of the cave of Machpelah indicates that he was not merely a nomadic sheik engaging in commercial deals involving barter.¹²⁴

A 1995 excavation at Dor unearthed a clay pitcher in which about 19 pounds of silver. The silver had been weighed and wrapped into 17 units before being buried beneath the floor in the owner's version of an ancient floor safe. It appears that the stash remained there since the destruction of the city by the Israelites during the period of the Judges.

Among other things, the hoard tells us about the uses of money during this very early

¹²³ McGarvey, pp. 257-258.

¹²⁴ Free and Vos, p. 61.

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period — half a millennium before the introduction of coinage — when traders either bartered with each other or made payments with precious metals (gold or silver) measured by weight. Instead of the coin, the shekel was the unit of measure at this time. . . . Each of the linen bags was sealed with a bulla (a lump of clay bearing a seal impression).¹²⁵

A mosque sits upon the traditional site of the Cave of Machpelah. In modern history, only twice have non-Moslems had opportunities to briefly glimpse the interior of the cave beneath the mosque: a British officer during World War I and a twelve-year old girl in 1967 after the Six-Day War between Israel and her Arab neighbors.^{126 127}

Finally, at the age of 175, Abraham died and was buried with Sarah who had preceded him in death.

Hebrews 11:8-17 praise Abraham as a man of faith. James 2:23 says Abraham was the “Friend of God.”

Isaac

The birth of Isaac, his journey to Mt. Moriah with Abraham (where Abraham intended to sacrifice him as God commanded) and Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah were noticed while discussing Abraham’s life. Sometime after the death of Abraham, twin sons were born to Isaac and Rebekah. Esau, the first born, grew to be a hunter (Genesis 25:27). Jacob, the second son, was a smart man who sometimes tricked his brother, father-in-law and other people. He became a shepherd. Once Jacob sold food to this hungry brother who was returning from the field. The price of that meal was Esau’s birthright (the privilege of the first born child to inherit great possessions and blessings).

¹²⁵ Ephraim Stern, “Buried Treasure,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 4, July-August 1998, p.48.

¹²⁶ Free and Vos, p. 62.

¹²⁷ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, pp. 13-14.

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Archaeological light on this instance of selling one's birthright to obtain some desired object is furnished by the Nuzi tablets, found in Mesopotamia and dating from the patriarchal period. In one Nuzi tablet, there is a record of a man named Tupkitilla, who transferred his inheritance rights concerning a grove to his brother, Kurpazah, in exchange for three sheep. Esau used a similar technique in exchanging his inheritance rights to obtain the desired stew.¹²⁸

The promises God made before to Abraham were repeated to Jacob, whose name God later changed to "Israel."

Isaac journeyed to Gerar. This city belonged to the Philistines and was home to Abimelech, King of the Philistines. While in this city Isaac told the same lie Abraham and Sarah told twice before; Isaac and Rebekah pretended to be brother and sister.

After leaving Gerar, Isaac traveled to Beersheba. There Isaac reopened the wells formerly dug by his father Abraham. However, the Philistines fought with the servants of Isaac over these wells (Genesis 26:15-22). In the late 1800s, things had not changed much respecting disputes over water rights.

In conversation with the sheik of the village, who called at our camp, I learned that his people and those of another village farther south had recently had a fight, in which five men were killed, and that the quarrel was about the ownership of a well which lies between the two villages. At once I was reminded of the quarrel which arose between Isaac and the herdsmen of Abimelech in this very vicinity, nearly 4000 years ago, for the

¹²⁸ Free and Vos, p. 63.

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very same cause.¹²⁹

Isaac's journeys were guided by God. While at Beersheba, God also made the same promises to Isaac that he made to Abraham (Genesis 26:3-4, 24). These promises were not only about land and many descendants (children and their children, and so on) but included the coming of Jesus Christ through whom the whole world could be blessed.

When Isaac was old and blind, he told Esau to hunt deer and prepare the meat for him, after which he would give Esau a blessing and his inheritance as the first born child. However, Rebekah, Isaac's wife, and their son, Jacob, tricked Isaac while Esau was away hunting. Jacob wore some of Esau's clothes and covered his hands and neck with goat skins to make Isaac believe Esau had returned. Instead of venison, Rebekah prepared a meal of goat. Through this deception Jacob received the blessing and inheritance intended for Esau.

Archaeological light on oral blessings is found in the Nuzi tablets. One tablet shows that an oral blessing in patriarchal times had legal validity, even in a law court.¹³⁰

Many years later, after the anger between Jacob and Esau ended, Isaac died at the age of 180 years old at Hebron. The city of Hebron is at a crossroads for the road between Jerusalem and Beersheba and east-west roads. It is also one of the oldest cities in Judah.

Jacob

Afraid for his life, Jacob fled from his angry brother, Esau. Jacob was also instructed by his mother and father to go to Haran (where other family members lived) to find himself a wife. While on his journey, God spoke to him in a dream at the city of Bethel. It was there God repeated

¹²⁹ McGarvey, p. 494.

¹³⁰ Free and Vos, p. 64.

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the promises first made to Abraham to Jacob also (Genesis 28:13-14).

Jacob lived the next twenty years in Haran working for Laban (Genesis 31:38). During that time he became wealthy, married Laban's daughters Leah and Rachel, and through his wives and two servant women he also married had twelve sons and one daughter (Dinah). Later, Rachel died while giving birth to Jacob's last son, Benjamin (Genesis 25:16-20). Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin became the fathers of tribes of Israel bearing their names (upon leaving Egyptian slavery hundreds of years later). Joseph bore two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, who also became fathers of tribes in Israel. Levi became the father of the priestly tribe which was scattered throughout the other tribes after they settled in Canaan.

Prompted by God and to escape the contempt and deception of Laban, Jacob fled secretly with his household from the camp of Laban (Genesis 30-31). Laban hotly pursued them, but was cautioned by God to not harm Jacob. Part of the reason for which Laban vigorously pursued Jacob was because Rachel stole the family idols before she departed (Genesis 30:19, 30). What about the theft of the family idols heightened the urgency of Laban's pursuit in his mind?

The answer was found in the Nuzi tablets, which show that possession of the father's household gods played an important role in inheritance. One of the Nuzi tablets indicated that in the region where Laban lived, a son-in-law who possessed the family images could appear in court and make claim to the estate of his father-in-law. Since Jacob's possession of the images implied the right to inherit Laban's wealth, one can understand why Laban organized his hurried expedition to

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recover the images.¹³¹

After leaving Haran, Jacob returned to Canaan. Esau no longer hated his brother for the trickery he committed and warmly greeted Jacob. Jacob settled near Shechem; later he lived at Bethel, Bethlehem, Hebron and finally Egypt.

Joseph

Jacob's wife, Rachel, died at Bethlehem. Jacob's son, Joseph, was sold into slavery by his brothers who were tending sheep at Dothan. Several years later Joseph rose from slave and prisoner in Egypt to second highest ruler of that nation.

. . . Joseph was not the only Semitic prime minister in Egypt; the records tell of one who live in the seventh century, B.C., bearing the good Hebrew name of Hur.¹³²

The pharaoh of Joseph's day was not Egyptian, but Hyksos from Canaan, who immigrated between 2000-1780 B.C.¹³³

When famine again occurred in Canaan, Joseph brought Jacob and his brothers to Egypt where their descendants remained for hundreds of years. Joseph gave the land of Goshen to his family; it was among the best land in Egypt.

THE FAMINE STELA. The second-century B.C.E. inscription on this stela from Schel Island, at the Nile's First Cataract . . . the text echoes the Joseph narrative, in which Egypt and Canaan suffer severe seven-year famines.¹³⁴

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹³⁴ Bezalel Porten, "Did the Ark Stop at Elephantine?" *Biblical*

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In the course of time, both Jacob and later Joseph died and were embalmed according to the customs of the Egyptians (Genesis 49:33-50:3, 26).

Archaeological records from Egypt indicate that the embalmers and undertakers used a liberal supply of fine linen, spice, oils, and rich perfumes. The heart, liver, lungs, and viscera [internal organs, *ler*] were removed and placed in four vessels known as canopic jars, and the body was soaked in natron [sodium carbonate] before being wrapped in many yards of linen. The dry climate of Egypt was also a significant factor in the preservation of mummies . . .¹³⁵

Jacob was taken after his death to the Cave of Machpelah for interment (Genesis 50:13). Joseph was buried in Egypt and his coffin taken during the Exodus to Canaan (Genesis 50:24-26; Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32).

Archaeology Review, Washington, D.C., Vol. 21, No. 3, May-June 1995, p. 60.

¹³⁵ Free and Vos, p. 75.

Chapter 6: Nation of God

Egypt

Egypt represents one of the oldest civilizations; its people are descendants from Noah's son, Ham. The nation touches the Mediterranean Sea and is nestled in the Nile River Valley. Without the Nile River, Egypt would be desert like the deserts east and west of the country. Therefore, Egypt has been called "the gift of the Nile."

Ancient Egypt occupied almost the same area as modern Egypt does today. Its civilization stayed very close to the Nile River. Because it was almost entirely surrounded by desert, enemies could approach only from the west and northeast along the Mediterranean coast, from down the river valley, or directly over the sea.¹³⁶

The Nile River is the longest river in the world, and unlike most rivers, flows north. Since higher ground in Egypt is in the southern part of the country, Upper Egypt is in the southern part of the nation and Lower Egypt is in the northern part. The whole country is about the size of the state of New Hampshire (9,600 square miles).

The mouth of the Nile River divides into several branches as it enters the Mediterranean Sea. The two largest branches are called the Pelusiac (on the east) and the Canopic (on the west). Southeast of the Pelusiac lies the land of Goshen which Joseph gave to Jacob, his brothers and their descendants.

The branches of the Nile River entering the Mediterranean Sea created the rich Nile Delta. It was here

¹³⁶ Shelly, p. 74.

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that for centuries the Nile River deposited the fertile soils it gathers from its long course from central Africa. Goshen and its Jewish inhabitants enjoyed the rich farmland of the Nile Delta.

The Egyptian people were short, dark complexioned, having deep-set eyes, large cheek bones, thick lips, short nose and straight black hair. Their language was similar to Hebrew. Egyptian writing is called hieroglyphics, a form of picture writing. “. . . [H]ieroglyphics are composed only of consonants.”¹³⁷

In 1949, C.F.A. Schaeffer found a tablet at Ras Shamra containing the thirty letters of the Ugaritic alphabet in their proper order. It was discovered that the sequence of the Ugaritic alphabet was the same as modern Hebrew, revealing that the Hebrew alphabet goes back at least 3,500 years.¹³⁸

Most of what is known about Egypt of long ago has been unearthed through archaeology. Especially revealing have been the exploration of the great pyramids built in the desert. (Whereas the Egyptians built the pyramids and temples from limestone and granite, they built their homes of clay, which long ago deteriorated.¹³⁹) The desert climate preserved writings and other objects that would have decayed in many other parts of the world. One of the most striking notes about the Egyptians was their engineering skills by which they constructed mammoth pyramids and the Sphinx. These behemoth structures of antiquity continue to be engineering marvels, among other things being less than 1% out of square and divergence from level.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Free and Vos, p. 77.

¹³⁸ Jackson, *Biblical Studies in Light of Archaeology*, p. 32.

¹³⁹ Lewis, p. 96.

¹⁴⁰ J. A. Wilson, *The Burden of Egypt*, The University of Chicago Press, 1951, pp. 54f as quoted in *A History of Israel* [electronic book, page numbers not indicated].

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With the rise of the Third Dynasty (ca. 2600) we enter the age of Egypt's classical flowering, by which time all significant features of her culture had assumed a form ever thereafter to be normative. This was the Age of the Pyramids. Oldest of these is the Step Pyramid which Zoser, of the Third Dynasty, built at Memphis; with the mortuary temple at its base, it is the oldest building of hewn stone so far known. Far more marvelous, however, are the pyramids of Cheops, Chefren, and Mycerinus of the Fourth Dynasty (twenty-sixth to twenty-fifth century), likewise at Memphis. The Great Pyramid, 481 feet in height, its base a square of 755 by 755 feet, is constructed of some 2,300,000 blocks of hewn stone of an average weight of two and a half tons. And these were reared into place by sheer brawn, without benefit of machinery, yet with a maximum error of virtually nil. It certainly teaches us a profound respect for the technical skill of ancient Egypt a thousand years before Israel was born.¹⁴¹

The exteriors of some pyramids were originally covered with cement. "When thus encased its exterior was as smooth as a plastered wall."¹⁴² McGarvey also measured the interior passages of the pyramids and further provided interesting descriptions. In 1879 when McGarvey visited Egypt, the Serapeum or sepulchre of the sacred bulls yet contained one mummified bull.¹⁴³

In 1988, preliminary preparation to build a parking lot 200 feet from King Tut's tomb uncovered not a pyramid but an immense underground tomb. "A

¹⁴¹ Bright.

¹⁴² McGarvey, p. 426.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 436.

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mammoth mausoleum uncovered in Egypt may hold up to 50 sons of the greatest of the pharaohs.”¹⁴⁴

Once, Egypt was a world empire. At other times it was governed by foreign kings (pharaohs). It was one of these foreign rulers who appointed Joseph to second highest authority in all Egypt. Later, when Egyptians again ruled themselves, the Hebrews were hated and made slaves.

Memphis was the capital of ancient Egypt. The word “Memphis” means “city of good abode.” It lies ten miles south of Cairo. The chief city of Goshen was Rameses; it was a store city built by Hebrew slaves.

Alexandria was a great shipping port and an important cultural city. It was built by Alexander the Great.

A city in Egypt, founded by Alexander the Great in 332–331 BC after the conquest of Egypt. The city was built on the site of a small Egyptian village, Rhakotis, in which the pharaohs of Egypt settled Greek mercenaries and merchants. It is situated to the west of the Canopic arm of the Nile . . .¹⁴⁵

According to the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (xvii, 52, 6), the city had 300,000 inhabitants in his time (first half of the 1st century BC). During the struggle between Caesar and Antony in 47 BC the great library of Alexandria was burnt down and the 900,000 volumes which it contained were lost. Antony rebuilt the library and brought books to it from Pergamon.¹⁴⁶

A large Greek-speaking Jewish colony flourished in Alexandria centuries after the Hebrew exodus from

¹⁴⁴ Michael, D. Lemonick, “Secrets of the Lost Tomb,” *Time*, New York, Time, Inc., Vol. 145, No. 22, May 29, 1995, pp. 48-54.

¹⁴⁵ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

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Egyptian slavery. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, was produced in Alexandria.

The remains of Alexandria lie 20 feet below the surface of the sea. “The ruins of the lighthouse and the palaces cover more than 5.5 acres — an archaeological gold mine, but a tremendous amount of territory to excavate, especially under water.”¹⁴⁷

Moses & the Exodus

Jacob’s descendants went from favored status to slaves in Egypt. The reason for the dramatic shift in policy toward the Hebrews is summarized in the following Scripture. “Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph” (Exodus 1:8). The point is not that the then present king had not personally known Joseph. With a little help from archaeology and history, one discerns that a different dynasty of kings replaced the family of kings that were ruling when Joseph was second in command and when Jacob and his family were invited into Goshen. The latter king or pharaoh did not approve of Joseph. The former rulers were despised, as well were other foreigners who migrated to the nation with the approval of the former kings.

. . . about 1570 B.C. the native Egyptians drove out the Hyksos rulers out of Egypt, an Asiatic group that had governed the land for about 150 years, from c. 1730 to c. 1570. . . . It is generally believed that this pharaoh who did not know Joseph was one of the new line of native Egyptians, probably Ahmose I, who came to the throne when the Hyksos were driven out. Ahmose reigned 1570-1545

¹⁴⁷ Gabrielle DeFord, “Alexandria’s Lighthouse Found, But Will Its Library Disappear?” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 23, No. 3, May-June 1997, p. 14.

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B.C.¹⁴⁸

Hebrew slaves were charged with constructing treasure cities from mud bricks (Exodus 5). After the Hebrews petitioned Pharaoh to let them sacrifice to God in the wilderness, straw formerly supplied was withheld from them. They were required to secure for themselves straw in addition to making brick, and still produce the same number of bricks. Straw helped the mud bricks to hold together better.

An ancient Egyptian document, the Papyrus Anastasi, contains the lament of an officer who had to erect buildings on the frontier of Egypt . . . He could not work, he said, explaining, "I am without equipment. There are no people to make bricks, and there is no straw in the district."¹⁴⁹

The sun-dried bricks are nothing more than masses of mud, thickly intermixed with the short straw from the threshing-floors, pressed by hand into a wooden mould, and then laid in the sun to dry. . . . Two or three women were working up the dark surface-soil at the edge of a puddle of water into a stiff mud, and stirring into it the short straw of the threshing-floor. They operated with their naked feet and some crude hoes. Another carried the mud in her hands, when properly prepared, to the moulder. The mould had spaces for only two bricks at a time, each about twelve inches long, eight wide, and six deep. When the mould was filled it was lifted up, leaving the bricks on the ground, and placed at a distance in front, ready for another supply of mud. The bricks are turned

¹⁴⁸ Free and Vos, p. 77.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

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over occasionally while drying. The straw helps to keep them in shape while drying, and tends to prevent them from wasting in the rain and from crumbling in the dry weather. Such were the bricks made by Israel for Pharaoh in the time of the Egyptian bondage.¹⁵⁰

The enslavement of the Hebrews, the birth of Moses and the ten plagues 80 years after Moses' birth preceded the dramatic exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt. The pharaoh of the exodus is believed to be Amenhotep II whose body is in the Cairo Museum.¹⁵¹

The plagues were more than mere punishments of Pharaoh and Egypt to prompt them to release the Hebrews. It was at the insistence of the true God that freedom for the Israelites was sought. Pharaoh disputed the power of the Almighty God (Exodus 5:1-2). Therefore, each of the plagues was an indisputable victory of God over a god of the Egyptians.

. . . in addition to the Nile god (plague 1), they worshipped the frog god (Heqt, plague 2), the entire bovine family (cow, calf, bull, plague 5), various sun gods (plague 9), and the pharaoh himself as divine and a manifestation of the sun god (plague 10, when the son of Pharaoh died).¹⁵²

One might muse as to why the 10 plagues and the otherwise national calamity in Egypt regarding the departure of the Israelites are not recorded. Egyptians, who recorded their history in stone, only recorded complimentary things about their achievements. Later kings even altered previous records of former kings to

¹⁵⁰ McGarvey, p. 104.

¹⁵¹ Free and Vos, p. 81.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

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favor them through the fine art of *chiseling*.¹⁵³ However, the Papyrus Ipuwer seems to address these plagues with remarkable parallel.

Papyrus 2:2 — The river is blood.
Exodus 7:20 — The river was turned to blood.

Papyrus 2:6 — Blood is everywhere.
Exodus 7:21 — Blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

Papyrus 2:10 — Gates, columns and walls are consumed by fire.
Exodus 9:23-24 — And the fire ran along the ground.

Papyrus 4:14 — Trees are destroyed.
Exodus 9:25 — And the hail . . . brake every tree in the field.

Papyrus 9:11 — The land is not light.
Exodus 10:22 — And Moses stretched forth his hand . . . and there was darkness.

Papyrus 2:13 — He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere.
Exodus 12:30 — For there was not a house where there was not one dead.¹⁵⁴

The Israelite exodus is dated at 1440 B.C. by deduction based on the statement in 1 Kings 6:1, "And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt,

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁵⁴ Ralph L. Fusco, "An Egyptian Record of the Plagues?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 3, May-June 1998, p. 13.

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in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord” and dating of the destruction of Jericho by Joshua at 1400 B.C.¹⁵⁵ Ussher's chronology, however, dates the exodus to 1491 B.C. and Joshua's subsequent conquest of Canaan beginning in 1451 B.C.

God miraculously caused the Red Sea to part, providing them a route of escape from the pursuing Egyptian army. When the Egyptians tried to follow the Hebrew people, God caused the walls of water to collapse and drown the soldiers. Especially disbelievers in Bible miracles discount the miraculous crossing of what we know to be the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez). Some suggest, rather, that the Hebrews crossed shallow waters, called the Sea of Reeds, in the area of the present Suez Canal.

Some have argued that *yam suph* (translated “Red Sea” in KJV and other versions) should be correctly translated “Sea of Reeds” . . . The Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), Acts 7:36, and Hebrews 11:29 understand *yam suph* to refer to the Red Sea . . .¹⁵⁶

Shallow marshy lakes also are unable to destroy the pursuing Egyptian army.

J.W. McGarvey personally visited the vicinity to determine if the local geography on either side of the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez) could reasonably be matched with the biblical account of the Red Sea crossing. He prepared himself for the task by enumerating the following points from the biblical text.

1. The place was so situated as to require Israel to turn from the direct route toward Canaan in order to reach it (Ex. xiv. 2).
2. It was such that when Israel reached it they

¹⁵⁵ Free and Vos, pp. 86-87.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

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were “entangled in the land,” so that Pharaoh was encouraged to pursue them (xiv. 3). 3. It was such that when Pharaoh overtook them there was no escape for them except by going through the sea (xiv. 10, 13, 16). 4. It was such that in opening a passage the waters were divided, not driven away to one side, and that they were “a wall on the right hand and on the left” (xiv. 16, 21, 22, 29). 5. The distance across was sufficient to allow all the 600 chariots and the horsemen of Pharaoh to be within it at one time, and the water was deep enough to prevent the escape of a single person when the two walls of water rushed together (xiv. 7, 9, 28). 6. The place was near enough to Marah, now Huwarah, 33 miles below Suez, to allow Israel to march thither in three days (xv. 22, 23). 7. It was where Israel, after crossing, could find an immediate supply of drinking-water, so that they did not suffer for water till they came to Marah (xv. 22, 23).¹⁵⁷

In dismissing one theory, which doubtless was popular with critics because they required no miracle, McGarvey observed: “. . . if this event was not miraculous, it was nothing.”¹⁵⁸

Eight miles south of the head of and on the east side of the Gulf of Suez, McGarvey examined the Fountains of Moses.

We could see at a glance that this spot answers all the demands of the Scriptures as a landing-place for Israel after crossing. A gently ascending beach one mile wide, and stretching about five miles up and down the seashore, and abundant supply of water for

¹⁵⁷ McGarvey, p. 439.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

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their immediate use, and an easy march of three days to Marah, only 25 miles distant, are the features it presents; whereas, but a short distance above, there is no sea to cross, and immediately below there is a perpendicular shore at least 50 feet high. Looking directly across the sea, we say plainly the gap in the mountains on that side suitable for Israel's approach to the shore . . . A range of mountains . . . presents an almost perpendicular wall on the west side of the sea, beginning at its head, and stretching along the shore about eight or nine miles. Farther down the shore there rises the high and dark wall of another range . . . Between these there is a gap . . .¹⁵⁹

The gap in the mountains on the west side of the Gulf of Suez, McGarvey found, is three miles wide. The pass intersects the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez); therefore, Israel found itself trapped between the mountains on either side of the pass, the Red Sea on the east and the Egyptian army on the west behind it. Due to the miracle, Israel was able to march down

. . . a smooth beach, almost as smooth as a floor and gently sloping to the sea, opened a line of march two miles wide . . . The Fountain of Moses . . . nearly opposite the centre of this line of march, and the depth of the water . . . varies from 9 to 16 fathoms in the midst of the sea. On both sides the approach to this depth is gradual . . . and the distance across was about 8 miles . . .¹⁶⁰

Crossing the Red Sea, the Jews (as they were called much later) entered the Sinai Peninsula. There they

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 441.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 442-443.

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wandered for forty years because of lack of faith in God. The Sinai Peninsula is the triangular piece of land between the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba. It is a wilderness or desert; five individual wilderness areas are named (Shur, Etham, Sin, Paran and Zin). Mountain plateaus rise from 2,000 to 2,500 feet in this area. There is little water or vegetation. Today, 35,000 people live in the Sinai Peninsula.¹⁶¹

The most important single mountain in the Sinai Peninsula was Mount Sinai. Moses twice received the ten commandments on tables of stone from God. Sacrificial laws of similar complexity to the Book of Leviticus have been shown through archaeology to exist in the period when Leviticus was given by God. Arguments of critics that the sacrificial laws of Leviticus were too complex for the period are baseless. The Ras Shamra Tablets, dating to about 1400 B.C., contain such non-biblical sacrificial laws.¹⁶²

Further, the laws contained in Deuteronomy are similar in complexity with the Code of Hammurabi which predates the Law of Moses by several hundred years. Yet, there is sufficient dissimilarity in content to dispel any notion that the Law of Moses is in anyway dependent for material on the Code of Hammurabi. We categorically rejection the notion, "The law of Moses derive from Hammurabi's code."¹⁶³ The Law of Moses belongs in the period for which the Old Testament claims for it.¹⁶⁴

One of the remarkable institutions of Bible times was the Jewish legal system. It was quite different from anything that existed in any contemporary society of the time. There was no written law in Egypt at all, and the legal systems of Babylon and other nations

¹⁶¹ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 9.

¹⁶² Free and Vos, p. 97.

¹⁶³ Shelly, p. 70.

¹⁶⁴ Free and Vos, p. 103.

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were not documents to which judicial reference was made but rather were collections of the king's judgments for the use of the people. Judgment was the action of the king who not only made the law but actually was the law. No other nation had a legal system to which kings and rulers were subject and to which reference had to be made.¹⁶⁵

The value of archaeology in complementing biblical exegesis is evident regarding Deuteronomy 14:21, “. . . Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.” (See also Exodus 23:19 and 34:26.) To us, the passage appears somewhat obscure. However, this law of God pertained to a specific pagan worship passage that God warned the Israelites to avoid.

A similar rite is recorded on the Ras Shamra tablets, which indicates that if one wishes to gain favor with a deity, he should slay a young goat in milk and present it to the deity.¹⁶⁶

More contemporary translations of the text cited above dispute any relationship to Deuteronomy 14:21.

Estimates vary regarding the number of people who comprised the Israelite exodus from Egypt. Some estimates cite about two and a half million people. Moses conducted a census at Mt. Sinai and numbered the adult males (20 years and older) at 601,730 (Numbers 26:51). “. . . [P]apyri dating back to 3000 B.C. show that even at that early time strict census lists were made up, mention being made of the head of the house, resident female relatives, slaves, and young male children.”¹⁶⁷

At the foot of this mountain the children of Israel

¹⁶⁵ Gowers.

¹⁶⁶ Free and Vos, p. 105.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

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made a golden calf and worshipped it. This angered both Moses and God. The exact site of Mount Sinai is unknown today; at least three peaks are thought by various people to be the original Mount Sinai. In 1879 J.W. McGarvey examined the area and concluded that only one location corresponds to the biblical information. The mountain selected by McGarvey is 1,000 lower than Mount St. Catherine but has a spacious plain before it, from which it rises sharply.

The configuration of Mount Sinai not only agrees with the Scripture narrative, but it furnishes some of those very striking coincidences in minute matters which show the pen of an eye-witness in the narrative. The singular warning is said to have been given to Israel, "Whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: there shall not a hand touch it but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be a man or beast, it shall not live." Such a warning, in the case of the most of mountains, would be an utterly impractical one, because it would be impossible to tell, on account of the gradual subsidence of the mountain into the plain, just where the one begins and the other terminates. But, as we have said before, Mount Sinai rises abruptly from the edge of the plain . . .¹⁶⁸

Besides a number of possible traditional sites in the Sinai Peninsula, some also cite Saudi Arabia as the *true* location of Mt. Sinai. Accordingly, a book entitled *The Mount Sinai Myth* by Larry Williams purports to amass evidence supporting this contention. The mountain there under consideration as the biblical Mt. Sinai bears the name, Jabal al Lawz, and is located east of the Gulf of

¹⁶⁸ McGarvey, p. 449.

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Aqaba. Unauthorized excursions to the area by especially American amateurs and adventurers prompted the Saudi Minister of Antiquities to fence it and further post armed guards. Though designated as an archaeological site, apparently no excavation has occurred there or is anticipated.

Whether Jabal al Lawz proves to be the genuine mountain of Moses will doubtless continue to be shrouded in mystery. Only by conclusively demonstrating some other site is the correct biblical place or through qualified excavation of Jabal al Lawz can the mystery be properly arrested. The former so far has eluded archaeologists and the latter requires a dramatic shift in current policy in Saudi Arabia. Corresponding to identification of Mt. Sinai in Saudi Arabia, Williams argues for a Red Sea crossing at the Straits of Tiran at the southern end of the Gulf of Aqaba. He further claims that the Israelites crossed precisely upon a land bridge that lies under the water in the strait, which was revealed when the waters parted and permitted the Israelites to cross on dry ground instead of deep mud. Purportedly, satellite photos reveal a major ancient route through the Sinai Peninsula to the Straits of Tiran which reappears on the far side of the Gulf of Aqaba in Saudi Arabia and leads to Jabal al Lawz. At Jabal al Lawz itself, various artifacts supposedly remain, including: the base of an altar where the golden calf was worshipped, an altar of sacrifice before the mountain, boundary markers to the mountain established by Moses, the cave of Elijah, petroglyphs on rocks indicating calf worship and a fire-scorched mountain peak. Other sites in Saudi Arabia, many also fenced and guarded, are attributed to biblical locations along the Israelites exodus from Egypt.

Despite as interesting all the foregoing may be, its credibility at this juncture is seriously undercut by some serious matters. The tools of deceit employed by the bearers of this awe-inspiring information, freely admitted, include: lies, fraud, bribes and situation ethics. Likewise,

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freely admitted, these adventurers are unqualified and either accomplished their examination of the sites quickly or under the cover of darkness to avoid detection. Further, the so-called evidence is replete with assumptions and sometimes demolition of *strawmen*. Still, enough apparent evidence exists, including pictures, to warrant further investigation by qualified archaeologists under controlled and legal circumstances. To date, the forays into Saudi Arabia are associated with individuals and activities regarding similar adventures to discover the lost Ark of Noah in Turkey. That expedition, too, yielded inconclusive *evidence* and is an ongoing subject of debate in the *popular press*.

Moses had lived on the Sinai Peninsula for forty years in self-imposed exile after fleeing Egypt when he killed a taskmaster. The Amalekites also lived there and once fought with the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 25:17-19; Exodus 17:8-16).

The nation of Edom, descendants of Esau, occupied the land southwest of the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba. The land is mountainous. The city of Petra was a fortress carved out of rock in Edom. It is commonly called “The rose-red city, half as old as time.” The most extensive photography (coupled with much useful information) of Petra of which this writer is aware appears in the February 1935 issue of *National Geographic*.¹⁶⁹

It was built in a deep basin in the mountains, surrounded on every side by precipitous cliffs, and approached by one narrow pass between perpendicular ledges of rock. This pass, for nearly a mile as it descends toward the city, is in many places not more than 12 feet wide, and a small stream flows along its bed. It finally opens out into a wider valley

¹⁶⁹ John D. Whiting, “Petra, Ancient Caravan Stronghold,” *The National Geographic Magazine*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 67, No. 2, February 1935, pp. 129-165.

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called Wady Musa, and this into the area which was occupied by the city. Over this area are scattered the fragments of ancient dwellings, palaces, and temples, while the perpendicular walls of variegated sandstone all around are excavated for tombs and small temples. But the most remarkable structure is a temple of large dimensions and elaborate workmanship carved entirely out of natural rock in the face of a perpendicular cliff. . . . Its height is about 150 feet . . . It has a single interior chamber, which is without ornamentation . . . the existence of such a work and of such a city . . . shows that the land of Edom was once capable of supporting a rich and powerful people.¹⁷⁰

Today, Petra is a tourist attraction, popular enough to threaten the preservation of the site simply by the wear and tear exacted by its many visitors. Nearby, several hotels that rival the splendor of any on the planet cater to tourists. Petra is in the country of Jordan.^{171 172}

En route to Canaan, the Israelites asked permission to travel through Edom, but were refused. Because of their ancestral relationship to the Edomites, Israel was not allowed to fight Edom. Therefore, the Jews went around Edom and came up on the east side of the Dead Sea.

This route did result in confrontation between the Hebrews and the Amorites and the Moabites. Arriving on the east side of Canaan, two and a half tribes decided to settle the land there (Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of

¹⁷⁰ McGarvey, pp. 496-497.

¹⁷¹ Judith Miller, "Dawn in the Desert," *Conde Nast Traveler*, New York, The Conde Nast Publications, Inc., October, 1994, pp. 114-123, 183-187.

¹⁷² Judith Miller, "Camel Time: Saddle Up," *Conde Nast Traveler*, New York, The Conde Nast Publications, Inc., October, 1994, pp. 124-125, 187.

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Manasseh). Here also Moses died and was buried by God on Mount Nebo; Moses was not allowed to enter Canaan because of an occasion of rebellion against God. Aaron, Moses' brother and high priest, had died already. Only Joshua and Caleb remained of the men twenty-one years or older who left Egyptian slavery forty years earlier. The rest died in the wilderness and were not permitted to enter Canaan because of their disbelief in and rebellion against God. The massive nation of the Hebrews just east of the Jordan River was a new generation.

Before the death of Moses, the nation of Israel conquered the land east of the Jordan River. This territory was called the Transjordan; the first part of the word, "trans," means "across." Thus, "Trans-Jordan" means the land across the Jordan River from Canaan. Two and a half tribes were allowed to settle here after they agreed to help the other tribes conquer Canaan.

Joshua & the Conquest of Canaan

After the death of Moses, Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River. Once over the river, they camped at Gilgal; they used this site east of the city of Jericho from which to launch their attacks on Canaanite cities.

God turned to Joshua to lead the Israelites. He also reiterated the land promise made previously, beginning with Abraham. In the description of the land that they were to possess, God cited a people called the Hittites (Joshua 1:4). Until early in the twentieth century, the Hittites were unknown and not considered historical. The Bible, accordingly, was faulted.

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

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included a treaty between the Hittites and Ramses II . . .¹⁷³

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.¹⁷⁴

Since then, additional Hittite sites have been discovered. Once more the Bible has been exonerated by archaeological discoveries.

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 King Mursili sacked Babylon around 1600 BC, but did not attempt to hold the region.¹⁷⁵

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.¹⁷⁶

The biblical description of the Jordan River crossing and an assessment of the surrounding vicinity provide insight into that momentous occasion. According to Joshua 3:16, the flow of the Jordan River was halted in the area of the cities of Adam and Zaretan. The remains of these cities are about 25 miles north of the Dead Sea,

¹⁷³ Free and Vos, p. 108.

¹⁷⁴ Lewis, p. 92.

¹⁷⁵ Shelly, p. 82.

¹⁷⁶ Bill Humble and Ian Fair, *The Seven Churches of Asia*, Nashville, Gospel Advocate Company, p. 14.

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providing ample space for even the two and half million or so Israelites to cross. The *manner* in which the stoppage of the Jordan occurred is inconsequential since it was a divine intervention by God. Earthquakes along the geological fault that lies beneath the Jordan sometimes have caused landslides to temporarily block the Jordan River. The timing, of course, and the command of God to cross the flooded Jordan just then, distinguishes the event from coincidence.¹⁷⁷

Even after the waters were thus cut off it was no easy task for the host to move across. The shortness of time did not admit of their forming into narrow columns and crossing at fords or other places of easy approach, which would have required several days, but they were compelled to move forward in a mass, descend the bluff, push their way through the brushwood of the muddy bottom-land, climb down into the wet bed of the river, and clamber over similar obstacles on the other side as best they could. It must have required a long and toilsome day's march for all the people to pass "clean over Jordan."¹⁷⁸

The first city attacked by Israel was the walled Jericho. The people marched around the city seven days; on the last day they all shouted or blew trumpets. The walls fell flat. Jericho was destroyed and burned. Archaeological excavations at Jericho confirm the biblical description of the city as well as the date of its destruction. The original excavators stated:

The outer wall suffered most, its remains falling down the slope. the inner wall is preserved only where it abuts upon the citadel, or tower, to a height of eighteen feet;

¹⁷⁷ Free and Vos, p. 110.

¹⁷⁸ McGarvey, p. 347.

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elsewhere it is found largely to have fallen, together with the remains of buildings upon it, into the space between the walls which was filled with ruins and debris. Traces of intense fire are plain to see, including reddened masses of brick, cracked stones, charred timbers and ashes. Houses alongside the wall are found burned to the ground, their roofs fallen upon the domestic pottery within. . . . As to the main fact, then, there remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over their ruins into the city.¹⁷⁹

A later excavator disputed the date of the findings above, effectively discounting any connection with Joshua. However, a still later excavation confirmed the validity of the initial assessment of the site and its relationship to the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites.

The city of Jericho is about 16 miles east of Jerusalem and about 800 feet below sea level. Jerusalem is on a mountain about 2,500 feet above sea level. This is a drop of about 3,300 feet between the two cities. “The Roman road from Jericho to Jerusalem survives in places and a few of its milestones have been found.”¹⁸⁰

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

¹⁷⁹ Free and Vos, p. 111.

¹⁸⁰ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 22.

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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.¹⁸¹

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!¹⁸²

“New Testament Jericho is located one mile west of the modern city.”¹⁸³

The city of Ai was attacked next. However, Achan kept some of the captured things from Jericho for himself. Therefore, God allowed them to be defeated. After Achan's

¹⁸¹ Gowers.

¹⁸² Jackson, *Bible Background Study*, p. 29.

¹⁸³ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 17.

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sin was discovered and he was punished, Israel later defeated the city of Ai.

Representatives from the city of Gibeon, six miles north of Jerusalem, pretended not to be inhabitants of Canaan. Joshua was tricked into making an agreement with that city whereby Israel would not attack it. After the lie was discovered, Joshua still kept the agreement but made that city servant to Israel.

Even when the cities of Canaan joined to fight Joshua and his people, God permitted the people of God to win. First, Joshua led his army against the southern cities when they attacked the city of Gibeon. God caused a hailstorm to kill the fleeing armies of Israel's enemies.

Hail, even without God's providence guiding it, can be devastating. Hail the size of "bowling balls" reportedly fell in Sydney, Australia in the summer of 2002.¹⁸⁴ In July of 2002, "egg-sized hailstones" killed 16 and injured 200 in China as it pelted them for 25 minutes; the hail and accompanying winds also caused several buildings to collapse.¹⁸⁵

Among the cities conquered were Eglon and Hebron. The city of Hebron became ". . . one of the six cities of refuge (Josh. 20:7) as well as a city of the Levites (Josh. 21:11-13)."¹⁸⁶

Northern cities also banded together to resist the oncoming people of God. However, they too were defeated near Lake Merom. Of all the cities Joshua conquered, only Hazor did he destroy with fire. Excavation of Hazor showed that it was destroyed by fire in about 1400 B.C.

The Amarna Tablets provide an extra-biblical perspective of the conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews. They also confirm that politically Canaan was ruled by several city-states, each with its own king, when the

¹⁸⁴ "Planet Watch," *Popular Mechanics*, New York, NY, Vol. 179, No. 7, July 2002, p. 30.

¹⁸⁵ "Hail in China Kills 16, Injures 200," *The Intelligencer*, Wheeling, WV, Monday, July 22, 2002, p. 11.

¹⁸⁶ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 15.

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Israelites arrived. The king of Jerusalem wrote seven of the letters and letters from kings in Tyre and Sidon also were found.

Several of the Amarna Tablets tell of the invasion by a group called the Habiru. Some scholars believe that the Habiru are to be identified with the Hebrews under Joshua; it is at least possible that the Amarna Tablets reflect the conquest from the standpoint of the native dwellers of Canaan.¹⁸⁷

Not all the inhabitants of Canaan were defeated; for centuries the enemies that remained troubled Israel. For instance, the coastal plain was kept by fierce people, the Philistines. The principle cities of the Philistines were Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod, Askelon and Gath; they were close enough to each other that they could signal each other at night with torches.

Even before the Biblical references, Gaza is mentioned in Egyptian texts. For thousands of years it was the gateway from Canaan to Egypt. In the Hellenistic period it was the largest city in Syria-Palestine. Aside from its importance as a commercial interchange, it produced wine, oil and wheat. Although Gaza has neither rivers nor springs, wells were abundant and supplied the city with more than enough water in antiquity.¹⁸⁸

Gath was closest to the mountains controlled by Israel and suffered the most in the hostilities between the two peoples. When J.W. McGarvey visited this vicinity in 1879, the homes were still being made of mud brick. He observed, "There is no doubt that the ancient cities on this rich plain were built like the modern villages, chiefly

¹⁸⁷ Free and Vos, p. 116.

¹⁸⁸ Hershel Shanks, "Gaza Report," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 23, No. 2, March-April 1997, p. 53.

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of sun-dried bricks, and this in part accounts for the meagreness [sic] of the ruins which they have left.”¹⁸⁹

The tribe of Dan was given the land still occupied by the Philistines. For this reason, some people from the tribe of Dan looked for some other place to live. They traveled north and conquered a city that they renamed, Dan. The Book of Judges records several battles fought over the course of several hundred years against some of the peoples left in Canaan.

God commanded Israel to conquer the people of Canaan because they were wicked. They did not believe in or worship God. If God had allowed the heathen people to remain in the land, their bad influence on Israel would have led God’s people into sin, too. Israel failed to conquer all the people, and they did lead the people of Israel to worship idols and commit many other sins.

When the land of Canaan was divided among the tribes, there was no place for the tribe of **Levi**. The Levites were given 48 cities scattered throughout the tribes.

The Judges

Among the inhabitants of Canaan what were not conquered were the Jebusites in Jerusalem. According to the Amarna Tablets, Jerusalem remained loyal to Egypt even after occupation of Canaan by the Hebrews.¹⁹⁰ Once the Philistines were doubted to be inhabitants of Canaan during the period of conquest. Dozens of excavations, however, have confirmed the presence of the Philistines during the time of the Judges.

After the death of Joshua and for hundreds of years (450 years, Acts 13:20) God raised up judges from time to time when necessary. Whenever God’s people adopted idolatry and generally corrupted themselves, God allowed Gentile nations to oppress or enslave them. After a number of years and upon national repentance, God

¹⁸⁹ McGarvey, p. 267.

¹⁹⁰ Free and Vos, p. 119.

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would raise up a judge to liberate Israel from her oppressors. Primarily three points marked the failure of God's people during this time: (1) the presence of the heathen, (2) idolatry, and (3) intermarriage with the Gentiles. The one passage that summarizes the period of the judges is Judges 17:6 (also quoted in Judges 21:25): "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Unlike kings, judges neither passed their duties to their descendants nor did the judges have immediate successors. The cycle of rebellion, oppression, national repentance and divine deliverance through judges was repeated often through that era. There were 15 judges: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah (the only woman judge), Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jur, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli and Samuel.

The word "judge" means "savior." The Book of the Judges is a book of the failures of God's people and represents the *dark ages* of Israel. God allowed seven major oppressions of his people during the period of the judges: The Mesopotamian Oppression, Moabite Oppression, Philistine Oppression, Canaanite Oppression, Midianite Oppression, Ammonite Oppression and another Philistine Oppression.

An Egyptian stele dated to about 1220 B.C. also indicates that the Egyptian army made an incursion into Palestine and defeated Israel. "This is the earliest reference to Israel in a contemporary inscription, and it shows that Israel was present in the land at the time."¹⁹¹ This would have been about 180 years after Israel's crossing of the Jordan River and destroying the city of Jericho.

Othniel led the resistance to the Mesopotamian Oppression (Judges 3:5-11). Ehud, a left-handed dagger man, plunged an 18 inch sword into the fat belly of King Eglon of Moab, after which an Israelite army defeated

¹⁹¹ Bright.

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Moabite forces. Ehud was a Benjaminite, who were known for being left-handed. Having gained a private audience with Eglon, as he greeted the king, Ehud with his left hand slew him (Judges 3:12-30). Later, Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with an oxgoad (Judges 3:31). Deborah rallied Israel under the military leadership of Barak to defeat the army of Jabin, king of Hazor. The footmen of Israel prevailed against 900 chariots under the command of Sisera at the Kishon River. Sisera, who fled, was killed by a woman, Jael. When Sisera fell asleep, she drove a tent pin through his temples, fastening his head to the ground (Judges 4-5).

Gideon led 300 soldiers armed with trumpets, torches and pitchers against a host of Midianites (Judges 6-8). Jephthah, who led the opposition against the Ammonites, is best remembered for the rash vow he made upon his return from battle (Judges 10-11). One of the most colorful and best known judges was Samson. He led no armies but fought personal battles with the Philistines. Israel, though, did engage the Philistines with an army, during which the Israelites were defeated and the Ark of the Covenant was captured (Judges 13-16).

The Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant to the city of Ashdod and placed it in the temple of their god, Dagon. Overnight, the idol fell and broke. This occurred a second night also, after which the Philistines eventually send the Ark of the Covenant back to Israel. Dagon was the pagan of god of grain and was widely worshipped for centuries throughout the Euphrates valley.¹⁹²

Theocracy Vs. Monarchy

The Jews asked for a king and Saul was chosen by God to be king. Following him, David was made king. After David, Solomon was appointed king. The next king, Solomon's son Rehoboam, ruled harshly and caused the kingdom to split into the northern and southern

¹⁹² Free and Vos, p. 124.

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kingdoms. The name “Judah” came to represent the southern kingdom, and the northern kingdom was called “Israel.” The ten northern tribes of Israel were wicked and grew more wicked year after year. Finally, God caused the heathen kingdom of Assyria to defeat Israel and take her people away as slaves. Sadly, the southern kingdom of Judah later was also defeated and taken away into slavery because of great sin; God caused the nation of Babylon to war against Judah. After several years in slavery, God permitted some of the Jews to return to Canaan and rebuild their cities.

The Bible account of the Jewish kings 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 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.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ David Noel Freedman and Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, “House of David? Is There!” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 21,

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The united kingdom of Israel began in 1095 B.C. with King Saul. The united kingdom continued for 120 years, during which each of three kings ruled for 40 years (Saul, David and Solomon). The united kingdom of Israel faltered in 975 B.C. when Rehoboam came to the throne of Judah and Jeroboam I returned from exile in Egypt to become king over the northern kingdom of Israel.

Though God acquiesced in the matter of allowing Israel to have a monarchy, God did not desire them to have a king (Hosea 13:11). God warned Israel ahead of time of the heartache that would come from having an earthly king (1 Samuel 8).

Saul

King Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin (as was Saul of Tarsus or better known as the apostle Paul). The city of Gibeah, four miles north of Jerusalem was Saul's home and served as the capital of Israel during his reign. Saul fought several wars with the Gentiles, including with: the Philistines (twice), Moab, Edom, Syria and the Amalekites. God became disenchanted with Saul because of his disobedience regarding Agag the king of the Amalekites and the spoils of that war (1 Samuel 15). Saul died of self-inflicted wounds on Mt. Gilboa in a doomed battle with the Philistines.

David

God chose David to be king while Saul still reigned as king. Consumed in jealousy, Saul pursued David and intended to kill him. Formerly, David was favored by Saul from the time that David slew the Philistine giant, Goliath.

David was anointed king over the tribe of Judah at Hebron, from which he reigned for the first seven years.

Hebron was the capital of David's kingdom

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for seven-and-one-half years, during which time six of his sons were born, including Absalom and Adonijah (2 Sam. 3:2-5).¹⁹⁴

After the death of Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, David was recognized as king over the entire nation. Prior to that, they each maintained armies which did war with each other.

Joab, David's general, captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites. "The significance of Jerusalem for Israel (and eventually for the church and the world) down through the centuries may be traced back to the days of David (c. 1000 B.C.)."¹⁹⁵ From then throughout the balance of Jewish history, Jerusalem has remained the capital city of the Jews. From the biblical text (2 Samuel 5:6-9; 1 Chronicles 11:4-8) and archaeological evidence, it has long been supposed that entrance to Jerusalem by Joab was obtained by scaling Warren's Shaft. A tunnel between the interior of Jerusalem and a water source outside the walls of the city, as the theory goes, proved to be sufficient weakness in the defense of Jerusalem.

'Warren's Shaft' was first discovered by C. Warren in 1867, and therefore bears his name. It was discovered anew and cleared in its entirety by the Shiloh expedition. It consists of a 130 foot long tunnel, stepped at the beginning and then continuing horizontally, until at its eastern edge it reached the top of the vertical shaft. The bottom of the shaft is c. 40 feet deep. The water entered it from the Gihon Spring and was drawn from the top of the shaft as from a well by the city's inhabitants who then returned back into the city. A hydrological survey prepared by the Shiloh Expedition revealed that part of the tunnel and the entire

¹⁹⁴ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 15.

¹⁹⁵ Free and Vos, p. 135.

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vertical shaft are in fact part of natural karstic fissures which were incorporated into the water works during the construction of the royal city in the 10th century BC.¹⁹⁶

Other archaeological examination of Jerusalem's underground water system and conclusions deny that Warren's Shaft was accessible in Joab's day. Instead, the remains of a large tower over the pool have been uncovered. Inhabitants of Jerusalem may have approached this tower over the pool, from which to draw water, through the tunnel above Warren's Shaft. Warren's Shaft appears to be a natural cavity in the rock that was exposed when enlarging the tunnel that connected to the tower above.^{197 198}

Warren's Shaft itself appears seriously lacking as a suitable access from which to draw water. Natural protrusions on the shaft walls and an estimated maximum depth of one foot of water at the landing below are problematic. Also, the rock mouth of the shaft lacks the grooves that ordinarily evidence wear caused by ropes that draw water.¹⁹⁹

It is now believed that the shaft, probably a natural feature formed by dissolution, was only accidentally discovered in the eighth century B.C. by workers expanding a tunnel that led to the spring.²⁰⁰

Jerusalem celebrated its 3,000th anniversary as the

¹⁹⁶ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.*

¹⁹⁷ Hershel Shanks, "New Life for an Old Theory," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 25, No. 1, January-February 1999, pp. 6, 70, 72.

¹⁹⁸ Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron, "Light At The End of the Tunnel," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 25, No. 1, January-February 1999, pp. 22-33, 72.

¹⁹⁹ Hershel Shanks, "I Cimbbed Warren's Shaft (But Joab Never Did)," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 25, No. 6, November-December 1999, pp. 30-35.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

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capital of Israel in 1996.²⁰¹ Israel, of course, has neither continued to exist as a nation nor occupy Jerusalem for those 3,000 years.

Under the rule of David, Gentiles in Canaan were subdued and neighboring nations were conquered, including: Moab, Zobah (north of Damascus), Damascus, Edom and Ammon.

A man of war, God did not permit David to build a temple for the Ark of the Covenant. However, David prepared the materials for the temple that was built by his son Solomon later.

Because of sin in the life of David, God allowed several calamities to buffet him. His reign was threatened with insurrection by two of his sons (one of whom was killed in battle) and a Benjamite. The nation was afflicted with pestilence also because of his sin. David's son, Solomon, was abruptly anointed king to quash insurrection for the throne by another son, Adonijah. Both installations of a successor to King David were occurring simultaneously.

Solomon was here at Gihon, while Adonijah and his friends were at the spring En Rogel, some seven hundred yards farther south in the Kidron Valley. A knowledge of the relative positions of Gihon and En Rogel permits a vivid reconstruction of this event. Solomon and Adonijah were out of sight of each other due to the terrain of the Kidron Valley, yet they were close enough that the shout of the multitude at Gihon could have been heard by the followers of Adonijah at En Rogel . . .²⁰²

Solomon

Solomon was the second son born to David and Bathsheba. The first son, the result of adultery between

²⁰¹ Shanks, "Jerusalem 3000: A Yearlong Celebration," pp. 24-28.

²⁰² Free and Vos, p. 140.

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David and Bathsheba, died. Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, in effect was murdered by David to conceal the adultery. Solomon was appointed king and successor to David in David's old age to thwart seizure of the throne by another son, Adonijah (1 Kings 1:5-48).

Five miles north of Jerusalem at Gibeon, King Solomon petitioned God for wisdom (1 Kings 3:4-15). The wisdom with which God blessed Solomon accounted for the expansion of the Israelite kingdom from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River — about 60,000 square miles. The demise of the Hittite Empire in Asia Minor and the weakening of Egypt and Assyria resulted in a power vacuum by which God through his providence elevated Solomon's kingdom.²⁰³

Having subjugated all neighbouring enemies in Syria-Palestine itself, and with Egypt and Assyria temporarily decadent, an era of peace and political security guaranteed Solomon supremacy in South-western Asia.²⁰⁴

Seaports at Tyre in Phoenicia along the Mediterranean coast and at Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba enabled Israel to extend its field of commerce throughout the known world. Copper mining near Ezion-geber also contributed to the wealth of the nation (Deuteronomy 8:9), though some archaeologists date these sites differently and attribute them to the Egyptians.²⁰⁵

. . . some twenty miles south of the Dead Sea. The surrounding hills were dotted with small ruined furnaces, and the whole area was black with heaps of copper slag. The rich copper veins that still protrude above the surface made mining a simple operation. Within a three-mile radius . . . three other

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²⁰⁴ Unger, p. 51.

²⁰⁵ Free and Vos, p. 145.

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large copper mining and smelting sites . . .²⁰⁶

Solomon's control of the caravan trade routes east of the Trans-Jordan contributed tremendously to his and Israel's heightened prosperity during this period. Control of these profitable caravan trade routes in subsequent history was often the reason for which Damascus, Israel and Judah, among other nations, warred with each other.

Domestication of the camel not only facilitated trade in the Syrian desert, where the animal was a decided improvement over the asses of earlier times, but actually gave birth to true caravan trade farther south, where too great distances between watering places had rendered desert traffic impossible. Solomon's domination of the frontier districts skirting the desert, including Zobah, Damascus, Hauran, Ammon, Moab and Edom, gave him a virtual monopoly on the entire caravan commerce between Arabia and the north, from the Red Sea to Palmyra. . . . Solomon undertook to make his state the chief middleman for the overland trade between Arabia and Egypt and the Hittite and Aramaean states of Syria and Asia Minor . . . This ambitious plan, coupled with his inventive policy of tapping Arabian trade from its sources by developing a maritime route on the Red Sea, must have resulted in a phenomenal increase in the volume of traffic as well as in the variety of commodities in such marts as Gaza and Damascus.²⁰⁷

One important commercial reason for Solomon extending the expanse of his kingdom to the Euphrates River was to monopolize as completely as possible the caravan trade

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

²⁰⁷ Unger, pp. 52-53.

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routes. Palmyra on the Euphrates was the “converging point where the great caravan route east and west crossed the river by the fords nearby.”²⁰⁸

The Queen of Sheba traveled to Jerusalem and marveled at the wisdom of Solomon and the wealth of the kingdom (1 Kings 10:1ff). The Queen of Sheba brought gifts borne by camels. Despite the objection of critics regarding references to camels in the Bible, the animal had long been domesticated.

. . . the effective domestication of the camel came at least as early as the period 1200-1000 B.C. It is during this period that the camel appears in cuneiform inscriptions, on the monument known as the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser and on a sculptured stone relief from Halaf showing a one-humped dromedary with a rider sitting on the saddle.²⁰⁹

The Queen of Sheba was from southern Arabia. “. . . [T]he kingdom of Sheba was the territory of the Sabaeans in southwestern Arabia.”²¹⁰ A clay stamp from southern Arabia, used to seal sacks of freight, was excavated in Bethel.²¹¹

Arabia flourished as a rich and desirable source of gold, precious stones, spices, horses and camels until the Roman period. Whereas previous world powers conquered and taxed Arabia, domination by the Roman Empire also resulted in the destruction of ancient dams. Arabia reverted to a desolate desert, which largely it remains today.

Besides having immense oil reserves, a resource the value of which and use for was yet unknown anciently, Saudi Arabia remains a vast store of gold. “This oil-rich nation is sitting atop 5000 square miles of potential gold

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁰⁹ Free and Vos, *op. cit.*

²¹⁰ Jackson, *Biblical Studies in Light of Archaeology*, p. 11.

²¹¹ Free and Vos, p. 146.

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deposits, geologists from Ohio State University told the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America, held in Boston in November.”²¹²

During heightened national prosperity, King Hiram of Tyre was contracted to provide skilled laborers and materials for the construction of Solomon’s palace and the Temple. Chief among the building materials were the cedars of Lebanon which were floated along the Mediterranean coast to Joppa, at the time the principle seaport in Canaan itself, before being brought inland to Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 2:16). Archaeological examination of texts, seals, ossuaries, etc. that depict or describe the Temple portray it as Syrian in style — not surprising in view of the Syrian help enlisted to build it.²¹³

The kingdom also grew militarily and secured itself with chariot cities at Hazor, Megiddo, Accho, Achshaph and Gezer. Excavations at Megiddo have unearthed Solomon’s stables in that city. They had a capacity of about 450 horses.

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.²¹⁴

Alliances with foreign nations strengthened the international security of Israel and the reign of Solomon. However, many of the subsequent treaties were sealed with Solomon’s marriage to the daughters of foreign

²¹² “Planet Watch: Saudi Arabia,” *Popular Mechanics*, New York, NY, Vol. 179, No. 2, February 2002, p. 6.

²¹³ Hershel Shanks, “Cultural Conundrum,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 4, July-August 1998, p. 14.

²¹⁴ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 8.

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kings, through whom idolatry was multiplied in Israel. Even Solomon corrupted himself in this regard. He had 700 wives and 300 lesser wives or concubines.

Near the end of Solomon's reign, some foreign powers became disaffected with Israel and the influence of Solomon. A new pharaoh in Egypt was disinclined toward Solomon. Hadad, an Edomite, returned from exile in Egypt to confront Israel. Rezon seized Damascus from the control of Israel. Jeroboam I, who had made himself an adversary to Solomon fled to Egypt to await the time when he would return to seize the throne over the ten northern tribes. God's hand was in these revolts as a consequence of Solomon's departure from faithfully serving God (1 Kings 11-12).

Divided Kingdom

Rehoboam, son of Solomon, succeeded his father on the throne of Israel. He decided to rule more harshly than his father, which resulted in the succession of the ten northern tribes to form the separate nation of Israel. Jeroboam I returned from exile in Egypt to become the northern kingdom's first king. Rehoboam remained king over the southern kingdom, henceforth known as Judah. The united kingdom began with the reign of Saul in 1095 B.C. It lasted through the additional reigns of David and Solomon until 975 B.C.

Northern Kingdom of Israel

The northern kingdom of Israel enjoyed four major logistical advantages over the southern kingdom of Judah. (1) Israel was comprised of 10 of the 12 tribes. (2) Israel outnumbered Judah three to one. (3) Israel had superior military power. (4) Israel had more fertile soil. A serious disadvantage for the northern kingdom was that Jewish worship was centered in Jerusalem. The sovereignty of the northern kingdom would be threatened by its citizens' pilgrimages to the holy city of Jerusalem.

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Therefore, Jeroboam established alternative, idolatrous worship at convenient sites in the northern kingdom. Calf worship was installed at the cities of Dan in the north and Bethel in the south of Israel.

Calf worship was practiced in Egypt from whence Jeroboam I returned from exile to be king over Israel. Excavation at Dan has yielded an approximately 60 foot per side square high place on which calf worship occurred.^{215 216}

Under the reign of King Ahab and his Queen, Jezebel (daughter of Phoenician king of Sidon), Baal worship was introduced into Israel. This additional introduction of idolatry into the northern kingdom heightened the nation's crimes against God, for which reason Assyria was permitted to destroy the nation. Elijah, a prophet of God, confronted the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel, resulting in the death of several hundred of these prophets.

Ahab built himself an "ivory house" (1 Kings 22:39). Excavation in Samaria unearthed its remains. Apparently, Ahab's palace ran "315 feet from north to south" and was made of white limestone and adorned with ivory.²¹⁷ Ivory inlays for decoration of furniture were found, many with reliefs of plants, animals and Egyptian gods.²¹⁸ The ivory pieces recovered number about 500.²¹⁹ The prophet Amos condemned the inordinate luxury of sinful Israel, mentioning their "beds of ivory" (Amos 6:4). Following the death of Ahab, his bloodstained chariot was washed in a pool (1 Kings 22:38). That pool (33½ X 17 feet) in the courtyard of Ahab's palace has been

²¹⁵ Free and Vos, pp. 152-153.

²¹⁶ Avraham Biran, "Sacred Places," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 5, September-October 1998, pp. 38-45, 70.

²¹⁷ Free and Vos, p. 155.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

²¹⁹ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 28.

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excavated.²²⁰

Jeroboam selected the city of Shechem as the capital of Israel. Peniel became a secondary capital east of the Jordan. Different leaders in Israel subsequently selected other cities for their capitals. Omri made Samaria the capital in his reign and it remained the capital of the nation until the nation was conquered in 722 B.C. by Assyria.

Omri . . . Hence with unusual foresight he selected the hill of Samaria, a site of superior strategic importance, capable of almost impregnable fortification, as his new royal residence and capital, and began building operations there. . . . That the Israelite state endured as long as it did in the face of the Aramaean and Assyrian advance was largely due to the strength of its capital.²²¹

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.

Excavations in Dibon, forty miles south of Amman . . . a fragment bearing the same script as that of the Moabite Stone was discovered.²²²

Archaeological discoveries often confirm biblical references to rulers of various nations, as they do regarding Ben-Hadad and Hazael, kings of Syria.²²³ 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

²²⁰ Jackson, *Biblical Studies in Light of Archaeology*, p. 13.

²²¹ Unger, p. 63.

²²² Free and Vos, pp. 160-161.

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

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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.²²⁴

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. Sargon's palace was found in 1843, from which a 40 ton winged bull was retrieved.²²⁵

A seal bearing a royal signature associated with last king of Israel, Hoshea, was auctioned in New York in 1993. The seal belonged to a high ranking minister of the king and was used to stamp official documents. It dates between 731 B.C. to 722 B.C. King Hoshea and the name of the minister appear on the seal.²²⁶

Southern Kingdom of Judah

Jerusalem continued to be the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. Like her sister nation, Israel, Judah also adopted idolatry and generally strayed from God-authored religion. King Jehoshaphat of Judah attempted to reconcile Judah and Israel through the marriage of his son, Jehoram, to Athaliah, daughter of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. The result was the introduction of Baal worship into Judah as well. God eventually permitted a foreign nation to conquer Judah, also. Under the

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-171.

²²⁶ Andre Lemaire, "Royal Signature," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 21, No. 6, November-December 1995, pp. 48-52.

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leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon defeated Judah in 587 B.C.

Before the demise of Israel at the hands of the Assyrians and later Judah by Babylon, Israel and Judah continued frequently to be enemies. Jeroboam encouraged Egypt under the leadership of Shishak to invade Judah, providing a serious battlefront for Judah on the north with Israel and on the south with Egypt. Shishak plundered Jerusalem and the Temple. However, Egypt also invaded the northern kingdom of Israel. Shishak recorded his campaign into Palestine in stone on the wall of the temple of Karnak in Egypt.^{227 228}

After the end of the northern kingdom of Israel, Judah became victim to the invasion of various nations and ultimately subject to Assyria. Under the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah, though, Judah rebelled against Assyria. After subduing other threats to its continued power, Assyria punished Judah, but was unable to capture Jerusalem. 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.²²⁹

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

The inscriptions of Sennacherib tell us of this

²²⁷ Free and Vos, p. 154.

²²⁸ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, pp. 17-18.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.)

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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.”²³⁰

The Assyrian records indicate this event occurred in 701 B.C.²³¹

Remarkably, Assyrian history acknowledges 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.”²³²

It was in anticipation especially of the confrontation with Assyria that 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 Chronicles 32:30). The tunnel is six feet high and about 1,800 feet long. A dedication inscribed in stone was found in 1880 which 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.²³³ 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

²³⁰ Free and Vos, p. 179.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 180.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

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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.²³⁴

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 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.²³⁵

Recent excavations suggest that Upper Gihon was actually **inside** the outer wall protecting Jerusalem – and guarded by two or three towers. Remnants of an outer wall were unearthed south of the spring. Further, remains of towers appear at Upper Gihon itself. If the conclusions drawn from these discoveries are accurate, why, then, was Hezekiah's conduit constructed?

My own suggestion is that Hezekiah, under the threat of attack by the Assyrian king Sennacherib, may have recognized that the tunnel afforded greater protection of the city's

²³⁴ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 33.

²³⁵ Dan Gill, "How They Met," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 20, No. 4, July-August 1994, p. 23.

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water supply than the pool at the Gihon Spring and the channel. True, the pool was protected by at least two towers (and perhaps three). Yet these prominent towers would have called a potential enemy's attention to the importance of this area. Moreover, a city gate – the most vulnerable point in a city's fortifications – was usually the point of attack. By digging the tunnel, Hezekiah redirected the water from the Gihon Spring to the other (western) side of the city, siphoning the water off before it reached the tower-protected pool. Even if an enemy such as Sennacherib breached the lower wall and captured the pool, the city's water supply would still be safe – at least until Sennacherib found the source (which was probably well camouflaged) and was able to stop it up.²³⁶

In the twilight years of Judah, King Josiah, the most righteous king of Judah, restored God-authored religion in the nation. The Law of Moses was discovered in the rubble of the Temple and again established in Judah. The copy of the Law may have been placed in the ancient equivalent of a time-capsule in the foundation of the Temple. Other ancient buildings contained foundation records, and especially “Nabonidus, king of Babylon in the sixth century B.C.” delighted in demolishing ancient buildings to recover them.²³⁷ After the death of Josiah, however, idolatry experienced a resurgence in Judah.

Former enemies, Egypt and Assyria joined forces to resist the threat of Babylon. King Josiah, an ally of Babylon attempted to prevent Pharaoh Necho's army from

²³⁶ Hershell Shanks, “Everything You Ever Knew About Jerusalem Is Wrong (Well, Almost),” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 25, No. 6, November-December 1999, p. 28.

²³⁷ Free and Vos, p. 186.

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joining the Assyrian forces. Josiah lost his life in the ensuing battle at Megiddo. Egypt and Assyria were defeated by the Babylonians at Carchemish on the Euphrates River. Judah then became the buffer between Egypt and Babylon, with Egypt largely controlling the kings in Jerusalem. This set the stage for the defeat of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 587 B.C.

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.²³⁸

The seal impression of an earlier king of Judah, Ahaz, surfaced in the antiquities market. It has since been authenticated and is an item of special interest.

This lump of clay, called a bulla, was used to seal a papyrus document. We know this because the back of the bulla still bears the imprint of the texture of the papyrus. Also on the back of the bulla, we can see the impression of the double string with which the document was tied. On the left edge of the front of the bulla is a fingerprint that may well be that of King Ahaz himself!²³⁹

Also, a seal impression belonging to King Hezekiah has been found.

Now an even more astonishing bulla has come to light — that of Ahaz's son, the great Judahite monarch Hezekiah. I say more astonishing because unlike the seal of Ahaz, which is purely epigraphic, Hezekiah's seal is also iconic — it depicts a two-winged beetle

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

²³⁹ Robert Deutsch, "First Impression," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 3, May-June 1998, p. 54.

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(called a scarab) pushing a ball of mud (making it a dung scarab). . . . For some time we have possessed seals and bullae of the servants of Israelite kings, but of the more than twelve hundred West Semitic seals now published, only two bullae — those mentioned here — bear recognizable stamps made by the seals of kings of Judah. . . . it is quite extraordinary to be able to look at original impressions formed by the seal of one of Judah's most important monarchs 2,700 years ago.²⁴⁰

Zedekiah, made king over Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, rebelled against Babylon, too. This proved to be the final forbearance of Judah by Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, destroying it in about 587 B.C. Modern archaeology has unearthed debris directly attributable to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.²⁴¹ “It seems that the ark, cherubim, and other wooden objects, now stripped of their gold, perished in the flames.”²⁴² Others theorize that somehow the Ark of the Covenant was concealed in an as of yet undisclosed cave and escaped destruction.

Judah previously experienced conquests by Babylon during which Israelites were deported to Babylon in 606 B.C. and 597 B.C. The prophesied 70 years of captivity (as Divine punishment) are calculated from 606 B.C. to the first return in 536 B.C. permitted by the Persian, King Cyrus.

During the seventh century B.C.E., the kings of Judah vacillated between Egypt and Babylonia half a dozen times or more.

²⁴⁰ Frank Moore Cross, “King Hezekiah’s Seal Bears Phoenician Imagery,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 25, No. 2, March-April 1999, p. 42-45.

²⁴¹ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*.

²⁴² Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 77.

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Ashkelon and Ekron cast their lots with Egypt. Although Nebuchadnezzar never succeeded in conquering Egypt itself, he was nevertheless able to reduce Egypt's actual and potential allies and client-states to rubble. Eventually, the pro-Egyptian policy of Judah (against the counsel of Jeremiah) led to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah in 586 B.C.E.²⁴³

Askelon and Ekron suffered the same disposition at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar as Jerusalem did.

In the late seventh century B.C.E., the Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar (the same one who two decades later destroyed Jerusalem and brought an end to the Davidic Monarchy) invaded the Land of the Philistines, leaving a swath of destruction. Some Philistines were even exiled to Babylon, just as the Israelites were. What happened to the Philistines afterward is a mystery. They seem to have lost their ethnic identity, for the Philistines, as we know them, simply disappear from the historical record.²⁴⁴

After the destruction of Jerusalem, a Jew named Gedaliah was appointed by the Babylonians to be governor over the remnant of the Jews left in Palestine. However, he was murdered by a man sent for that purpose by King Baalis of Ammon. Many of the fearful Jews then departed to Egypt for refuge from the anticipated wrath of the Babylonians over the death of the governor.

²⁴³ Lawrence E. Stager, "The Fury of Babylon," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 22, No. 1, January-February 1996, p. 77.

²⁴⁴ David Jacobson, "When Palestine Meant Israel," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 27, No. 3, May-June 2001, p. 43.

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The seal of King Baalis has been found. "The name Baalis means 'Baal has saved,' or 'Baal is salvation.'"²⁴⁵

Assyria

With the division in the Israelite nation into Israel and Judah, the Israelite control on foreign nations, already weakened, deteriorated rapidly. Neighboring nations then became the sometimes foes and sometimes allies of Israel and Judah who themselves were foes. In the political vacuum created by the demise of the nation of Israel at its zenith, other nations struggled for dominance in the Fertile Crescent. Assyria became the next preeminent power in the region and a threat to Israel and Judah.

The capital city of Assyria was Nineveh, which was on the Tigris River. Excavations revealed that the walls of this great city were 32 feet thick and 76 feet high.²⁴⁶ Assyria exercised its greatest power during the lifetime of the prophet Isaiah. The northern kingdom of Israel fell to the forces of Assyria when 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."²⁴⁷

The banishment of Galilee's Israelite population by Tiglath-pileser is dramatically confirmed by the archaeological evidence.

²⁴⁵ Robert Deutsch, "Seal of Baalis Surfaces," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 25, No. 2, March-April 1999, pp. 46-49.

²⁴⁶ Jackson, *Biblical Studies in Light of Archaeology*, p. 2.

²⁴⁷ Pfeiffer, p. 162.

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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.²⁴⁸

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.²⁴⁹

Among the archaeological discoveries of some interest are the Black Obelisk and a massive library of cuneiform tablets assembled during the height of Assyrian power by Ashurbanipal. The former item mentions tribute received from Israelite king, Jehu. Ashurbanipal is considered the last great warrior king of Assyria, though he was highly educated, too. Whereas we may struggle with Greek and Hebrew (besides English), Ashurbanipal struggled with languages ancient to him.

I have read the artistic script of Sumer and the dark (obscure) Akkadian, which is hard to

²⁴⁸ Zvi Gal, "Israel in Exile," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 3, May-June 1998, p. 50.

²⁴⁹ Bright.

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master, (now) taking pleasure in reading of the stones (i.e., steles) (coming) from before the flood, (now) being angered (because I was) stupid and addled by the beautiful script. . . . At the same time I was learning royal decorum, walking in the kingly ways, I stood before the king, my begetter, giving commands to the nobles.²⁵⁰

The Assyrians excelled as warriors and were renown 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.”²⁵¹ 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.²⁵²

Babylon

Babylon rose to world dominance once more and defeated Assyria to control the Fertile Crescent.

²⁵⁰ Free and Vos, p. 187.

²⁵¹ Shelly, p. 64.

²⁵² Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 26.

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Even as Assyria reached the zenith of her power the shadow of impending disaster began to fall over her. She was, in fact, overextended. Her massive empire was a jerry-built structure held together by sheer force. The unceasing strain of enforcing the submissiveness of subjects scarcely any of whom had anything but hate for her was beginning to tell, and at the very time when new forces were appearing beyond her frontiers with which she no longer had the strength to cope.²⁵³

Nebuchadnezzar succeeded where the Assyrians had failed to conquer Jerusalem (587 B.C.). One of the outstanding sights to behold in Babylon was the hanging gardens that Nebuchadnezzar built for his wife. The city of Babylon on the Euphrates River was impressive as well. 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."²⁵⁴ Massive fortifications were necessary since the site afforded the city no natural defenses.

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

²⁵³ Bright.

²⁵⁴ Free and Vos, p. 196.

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historian Herodotus 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. . . . Nebuchadnezzar also built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, a multistoried ziggurat decorated with trees and plants to resemble a mountain. According to legend, the gardens were built to remind one of his wives of her mountain homeland. The Hanging Gardens were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.²⁵⁵

Archaeological discoveries confirm other kings of Babylon, Evil-Merodach,²⁵⁶ Nabonidus and Belshazzar. Belshazzar and his father, Nabonidus, were co-regents at the time Babylon was conquered. The son ruled in Babylon as the Bible indicates and the father was away in Arabia when Babylon fell.

The detailed facts are that Nabonidus, in one sense the last king of Babylon, was not killed by the invading Persians but was given a pension by his conquerors. On the other hand, Belshazzar, elevated to the position of ruler of Babylon by his father, was killed when the city of Babylon was taken, as indicated in Daniel 5:30. The matter concerning Belshazzar, far from being an error in the Scriptures, is one of the many striking confirmations of the Word of God that have been demonstrated by archaeology.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Shelly, p. 69.

²⁵⁶ Free and Vos, p. 200.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

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Inattention to the affairs of war, perhaps imagining that the city of Babylon in his day was unconquerable, and apparent equal unconcern for his polytheistic responsibilities in Babylonian society greatly contributed to the final demise of his empire.

One of Cyrus' own clay cylinders tells that the priests of Babylon opened the gates of the impregnable city and let him come in.²⁵⁸

Jewish prophets during the exile in Babylon included Daniel and Ezekiel. Daniel was the prophet in the palace, whereas Ezekiel was the prophet in the countryside.

Medes & Persians

Persia (Iran) occupied land inferior to the Fertile Crescent and isolated from the nations that ruled it by natural boundaries. "The Persians were separated from the great civilizations of Mesopotamia by the Zargos Mountains."²⁵⁹

The Medes and the Persians conspired to defeat Babylon, which they did under the leadership of Cyrus in 538 B.C. Two years later in 536 B.C., Cyrus permitted people enslaved under Babylon's reign to return to their homelands.

Cyrus' Cylinder discovered by H. Rassam in the 19th cen., tells of Cyrus' restoration of peoples and their gods, and is in line with the spirit of the decree recorded in the Bible.²⁶⁰

During this period, the Jews made the first of three returns from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem. The Jewish leaders for these respective returns were Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. Unlike the former deportation of the Jews of the northern kingdom of Israel

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

²⁵⁹ Shelly, p. 88.

²⁶⁰ Unger, p. 28.

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by Assyria, the Jews who were deported from the southern Jewish kingdom of Judah were permitted to retain their ethnicity during their captivity. Without this provision, they like their brethren taken captive by Assyria, as a unit, would have been unable to return to Palestine and resurrect the Jewish economy and maintain her unique identity.

Although we should not belittle the hardships and the humiliation that these exiles endured, their lot does not seem to have been unduly severe. Transported to southern Mesopotamia not far from Babylon itself, they were not dispersed among the local population, but apparently placed in settlements of their own (cf. Ezek. 3:15; Ezra 2:59; 8:17) in a sort of internment. They were not, of course, free; but they were not prisoners either. They were allowed to build houses, engage in agriculture (Jer. 29:5f.), and, apparently, to earn their living in any way they could. They were able to assemble and to continue some sort of community life (cf. Ezek. 8:1; 14:1; 33:30f.). As noted above, their king Jehoiachin, who was deported with the first group in 597, was received as a pensioner of the Babylonian court and still regarded as king of Judah.²⁶¹

The synagogue was a development among the Jews during the time of their removal from Canaan in captivity. Jews returning to Palestine brought the synagogue system back with them.

The synagogue itself seems to have come into being during the Exile as people gathered together (literally, “synagogued”) to learn the Torah and other sacred writings. When the

²⁶¹ Bright.

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Jews returned to their homeland they continued the practice of listening to the Scriptures being read and interpreted (see Luke 4:16–22). The buildings where this took place became centres of worship as well.²⁶²

. . . built wherever there were at least ten adult males in the community.²⁶³

During a typical service there would be: recitation of Scripture (e.g., Deut. 6:4ff), prayer, the singing of psalms (unaccompanied by instruments of music), readings from the law, a sermon, etc. Alms might also be collected for the poor. . . . A group of “elders” exercised the oversight of the congregation (cf. Luke 7:3-5), and each synagogue appears to have been independent and self-governing.²⁶⁴

Persia (modern Iran) extended its domain into Asia Minor with the conquest of the kingdom of Lydia. The Persians commanded a well-organized army, comprised of specialized units: spearmen, archers, light cavalry with bows and heavy cavalry possessing armor and spears. Besides this,

The elite of the Persian army was the Ten Thousand Immortals, so called because the unit was always kept at a full strength of 10,000 men. . . . One thousand of the Immortals were the king’s personal bodyguards.²⁶⁵

One of the crowning accomplishments of the Persians in their 50 years of war with Greece was the spanning of the

²⁶² Gowers.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Jackson, *Background Bible Study*, p. 107.

²⁶⁵ Shelly, p. 90.

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Hellespont (Bosphorus Strait between Asia and Europe) with a floating bridge.

Persian provinces were called satrapies and were ruled by Persians called satraps. Greece had expanded its influence into Asia Minor as well. Later, Greece successfully expanded its kingdom at the expense of Persia.

Other great rulers among the Medes and Persians included Darius, Xerxes I (Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther) and Artaxerxes. Darius promoted legal reforms, commerce, industry, improved roads and a postal system. Under Artaxerxes, Ezra led Jews to Jerusalem and Nehemiah compelled the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

In about 407 B.C., Jews who had migrated to an island in the Nile River (583 miles south of Cairo) sent a petition to the Persian governor of Jerusalem. These Jews may have been the descendants of Jews who fled to Egypt with the prophet Jeremiah after the Babylonian appointee in Judah was murdered (Gedaliah, 2 Kings 25:22-26). They desired permission to rebuild the Temple on the island of Elephantine. These papyri letters were written in Aramaic.²⁶⁶ Part of the Book of Ezra was written in Aramaic, which rather than testimony against the book being written in the era in claims nicely corresponds to the extant secular evidence for that period.

The winter home of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) was at Shushan (Susa). Excavations there unearthed the Code of Hammurabi and palace, the roof of which was supported by 72 ornate columns. The walls were decorated with murals.

The intertestamental period of divine silence began during the time of the Persian Empire. Approximately 400 years separate the revelations from God with which the Old Testament closes and the renewal of divine revelation recorded in the Gospel records.

²⁶⁶ Free and Vos, p. 199.

Greece

Greece was a collection of city-states that often operated independently and as frequently warred with each other.

An independent city-state was called a *polis*. Each consisted of the city and surrounding countryside. The largest of these was Athens, with about one thousand square miles of territory.²⁶⁷

Sometimes, a coalition of city-states led by a universally acknowledged leader enabled Greece to function as a national entity.

The next power to dominate the known world was Greece under the guidance of Alexander the Great. Alexander's army consisted of 65,000 troops, including 16,000 support personnel and an over 6,000 horse cavalry. Though outnumbered, Alexander the Great personally led his cavalry so decisively that the Greeks overpowered the great Persian army.

When Darius III sent a petition seeking peace and suggested that the Euphrates River should be the boundary between the Greeks and the Persians, Alexander responded:

Your forefathers came into Macedonia and into the rest of Greece and did us harm, without any previous injury from us. Now I, having been appointed leader of the Greeks and wishing to punish the Persians, have crossed into Asia . . . My father was killed by conspirators whom you instigated, as you have boasted to everybody in your letters.²⁶⁸

Alexander demanded unconditional surrender. The Medes and Persians were defeated in 333 B.C., beginning with

²⁶⁷ Shelly, p. 79.

²⁶⁸ Free and Vos, pp. 218-219.

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Alexander's advancement into Asia Minor.

Alexander the Great continued to conquer everything subject to Persia. He marched his army south along the eastern Mediterranean coast through Syria, Phoenicia and Canaan to Egypt. Several cities surrendered instead of resisting the Grecian army. Tyre, though, refused, claiming neutrality in the conflict between Greece and Persia.

The land side of the city of Tyre was destroyed years before by Nebuchadnezzar. However, the island segment of Tyre persisted until that day and flourished. Alexander the Great built a causeway from the land to the island city from the debris of the former land side part of Tyre. Additionally, Alexander assembled a fleet of 220 ships to confront the fleet of Tyre and the city itself. Tyre fell seven months after the siege began.

The city was totally destroyed and the inhabitants who were not killed were sold into slavery. Estimates of those sold into slavery range from 13,000 to 30,000.²⁶⁹ The prophecy recorded by Ezekiel regarding Tyre (Ezekiel 26) was completely fulfilled by the conquest of Alexander the Great. Ezekiel 26:12 particularly applies to the latter conflict: “. . . and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water.”

Gaza also resisted Alexander the Great. Gaza was well fortified on top of a 60 foot mound. In order to use his siege equipment, Alexander built an adjacent mound from which to attack the city. Gaza fell after two months and 10,000 men were killed within the city. The balance of the population was sold into slavery. Great spoils from the wealthy city enriched the quartermaster department of Alexander the Great's mighty army.²⁷⁰

Egypt welcomed the rule of Greece as an opportunity to throw off the control of the Persians. The conquests of

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

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Alexander the Great took him throughout Persia and as far east as India. Alexander the Great conquered the known world in 11 years.

Alexander died at the age of 33 in Babylon, the victim of a fever. Following the death of Alexander the Great, his kingdom was divided between rival generals. Seleucus exercised control over Syria and Ptolemy controlled Egypt. Once more Palestine became the buffer between rival military powers. Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), a Seleucid ruler, outlawed Judaism in Palestine, had copies of the Law burned, banned Sabbath keeping, forbid circumcision and sacrificed a pig on the altar in the Jerusalem Temple. This led to the Maccabean Revolt.

Even before Greek dominance, Greek culture somewhat influenced the world it would ultimately subdue. For instance, excavations in Palestine have unearthed Greek coins (the drachma) in strata dating to the Persian period.²⁷¹ Under the influence of the Greeks, their language became an international language (koine Greek). This set the stage for the revelation of the New Testament in Greek and its subsequent proclamation throughout the world. "In the early second century BC, it was possible to travel from the south of modern France to India using only Greek to communicate."²⁷² Alexandria in Egypt was established and Jews were encouraged to settle there. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint, was translated at Alexandria (285 B.C.).

Maccabean Revolt

Mattathias, a priest, with his sons waged guerrilla warfare against the forces of Antiochus. They attained several victories which eventually permitted them to take Jerusalem and cleanse the Temple. Hanukkah is the Jewish commemoration of this event that prevails today.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

²⁷² Shelly, p. 77.

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Ultimately, the Jews were able to obtain a measure of independence. Their own coins were minted under the leadership of Simon. However, the Jews plunged into a civil war between the Hellenistic Sadducees and the religiously pious Pharisees. Despite the Pharisee's appeal to Syria for help, the Sadducees prevailed in the civil war. Celebrating their victory, the Sadducees murdered the wives and children of 800 Pharisees in front of the Pharisees who were crucified. During a subsequent civil war, the Roman general, Pompey, intervened and conquered Jerusalem for Rome in 63 B.C.

Rome

The Roman Empire next ruled the world and Canaan. A "massive arch and a wide river channel" unearthed in London and dating to the first or second century Roman occupation illustrates the expanse of the influence of the Roman Empire.²⁷³ It was during this period Jesus Christ was born. Over the years, some of the cities changed names. Often cities were destroyed in war and new cities were built upon the ruins of the former cities. Today, many of the cities of ancient Bible history are cities in which people today live. Other cities have been abandoned and are being re-discovered through archaeology, "digging up the past."

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

²⁷³ "History Pieces Found," *Herald-Star*, Steubenville, OH, 12-18-98, p. 2A.

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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.

Roman Control of Palestine

The Herods were descendants of Esau, called Idumeans, and ruled the land formerly belonging to Edom. Due to their early alliance with the Romans as they entered the region, the Herods were granted authority over various segments of Palestine. Herod the Great was first given control of Galilee. When the Jews attempted to throw off Roman control in 40 B.C., Herod the Great with Rome's help retook Palestine for the Empire. Consequently, Herod the Great was appointed king in Palestine by the Romans. "Herod was an Idumean or Edomite in race, a Jew in religion (for John Hyrcanus had forced all Idumeans to be circumcised and become Jews a century earlier), and a Graeco-Roman in cultural and political ties."²⁷⁴ "Herod had 10 wives and at least 15 children."²⁷⁵ He murdered his favorite wife and his favorite sons based on doubtful accusations made against them. Herod also killed his eldest son and ordered the death of prominent Jews at his death so there would be mourning in the land when he died. That order was not fulfilled. It was about this time that Herod also decreed that babies in Bethlehem should be killed in an attempt to murder baby Jesus.

Herod the Great caused great buildings to be

²⁷⁴ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 99.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

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constructed. His building activities were concentrated in Samaria, Caesarea and Jerusalem. He made Caesarea the Roman capital of Palestine. Caesarea, though, is uninhabited today. It even had a sewer system that was flushed by the Mediterranean Sea.²⁷⁶ Herod also constructed an aqueduct and tunnel between Mt. Carmel and Caesarea to provide drinking water (13½ miles).

Part of Herod's massive building program in his new city of Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast was to construct a manmade harbor.

The Bible land did not have a good natural harbor, so Herod spent 10 years building an artificial harbor here at Caesarea — an undertaking never before attempted. . . . To create this harbor, Herod built two enormous breakwaters out into the Mediterranean. The south breakwater began here at the present harbor wall and went a third of a mile out into the sea. It was 200 feet wide. To build this breakwater Herod used cut stones, 50 feet long and 18 feet high, and his builders somehow moved them out into the Mediterranean and lowered them down into 120 feet of water. What made this harbor possible was hydraulic concrete — concrete that will harden under water. The Romans had learned the secret of hydraulic concrete only 25 years earlier, and Herod used it here at Caesarea. Underwater archaeologists recently located a great block of concrete, 50 feet square, that was poured and hardened at the bottom of the sea.²⁷⁷

Wooden forms beneath the sand are still attached to the concrete blocks. “The divers of the underwater research

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

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team followed the two breakwaters, the northern one measuring 250yd and the southern 600yd, enclosing a sheltered area of about 40 acres.”²⁷⁸ A coin recovered from the floor of the harbor pictures the entrance of the harbor.²⁷⁹ Great stone rings in a pier dating back to Herod’s harbor were used to secure ships at dock. Remains of a series of warehouses indicate the great commercial shipping that passed through Caesarea.

Herod began building the Temple in Jerusalem in 20 B.C. Construction was completed in A.D. 64, just shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70. The Temple was 15 stories high.²⁸⁰ Excavations in the Rabbinic Tunnel along the Western or Wailing Wall have found a Herodian stone weighing about 415 tons.²⁸¹ No wonder Jesus’ disciples were amazed and could only envision the destruction of the Temple could happen in the destruction of the world, too (Matthew 24:1-3).

He employed a thousand wagons, ten thousand workmen, and trained a thousand priests to work in the most sacred area. The basic structure was completed in about a year and a half, but the sanctuary was not finished for forty-six years (John 2:20).²⁸²

Wayne Jackson provides an unsurpassed overview of the temple compound as it existed in the days of Jesus. He includes helpful descriptions of the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Women, the Beautiful Gate, the Court of Israel, the Court of the Priests, the sanctuary, the veil and the Holy of Holies. All of this is greatly aided by an accompanying diagram.²⁸³

²⁷⁸ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.*

²⁷⁹ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 106.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁸² Jackson, *Background Bible Study*, p. 92.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-96.

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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.²⁸⁴

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.²⁸⁵

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 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.²⁸⁶

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

²⁸⁴ Abraham Levy, “Bad Timing,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 4, July-August 1998, p. 20.

²⁸⁵ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 9.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73, 85-86.

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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.²⁸⁷

Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, was assigned the province of Galilee following the death of his father. This is the Herod who John the Baptist criticized for Herod's illicit relationship with his brother's wife, Herodias (Mark 6:16-28). His own wife, the daughter of King Aretas of Arabia, he refused and sent away. It was also Herod Antipas before whom Jesus was sent during his trial (Luke 23:5-15).

Herod Archelaus was the eldest son of Herod the Great and after the death of his father he ruled over Judaea and Samaria. The Romans, however, banished him to Gaul (France). A Roman procurator or governor was established in his place. The procurator reported directly to the Emperor; this office was a departure from a sort of home rule permitted the Herods, who were native to the region. Pontius Pilate served as this governor when he sentenced Jesus to be crucified. Archaeological confirmation of Pontius Pilate as governor in the reign of Emperor Tiberius was discovered in Caesarea in 1961.²⁸⁸ At Caesarea . . .

. . . in the theater, the archaeologists found this stone with the inscription, "Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judaea." You can see the name in Latin, Pilatus. This is very important because it is the only extra biblical evidence

²⁸⁷ Asher Grossberg, "Behold the Temple," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 22, No. 3, May-June 1996, p. 47.

²⁸⁸ Free and Vos, p. 239.

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of Pilate that has ever been found.²⁸⁹

Herod Philip, rightful husband of Herodias, was also a son of Herod the Great. He ruled an area northeast of the Sea of Galilee. His capital was at Caesarea Philippi.

Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, ruled the land formerly governed by his uncle Antipas (Galilee and Peraea) and Judaea and Samaria. This Herod killed the apostle James and imprisoned the apostle Peter (Acts 12:1-3). Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I, was given an area east of the Sea of Galilee to rule. The apostle Paul appeared before this Herod (Acts 25:13; 26:1-3).

Masada was one of the final outposts of Jews following the revolt of A.D. 66 to suffer defeat by the Romans. Formerly, Masada on the western shore of the Dead Sea was the site of two mountain-top palaces belonging to Herod the Great. The mountain towers 1,300 feet over the surrounding area and boasts a flat top 1,900 feet long. The summit was fortified with a double wall accented with 37 towers.

Following the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, 960 zealots (men, women and children) seized the mountain by "treachery." There they made their ill-fated last stand against the Roman Empire in A.D. 73. The conquering army attained access to the walls on top of the mountain by the construction of a huge siege ramp. War engines (towers and battering rams) approached the summit this way. Defeat, capture, torture and death imminent, the zealots entered a murder-suicide pact. When the Romans broke through the walls they discovered the defenders dead and the buildings ablaze. "It is the Alamo of the ancient world."²⁹⁰ Only two elderly women and five children survived Masada.

The western palace on Masada was at the top of the siege ramp built by the Romans. It evidences a severe

²⁸⁹ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 93.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

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burning, in keeping with the account of Josephus. This structure was also large enough to accommodate the nearly 1,000 Jews who purportedly died in the suicide-murder pact.²⁹¹ Excavations on Masada also have revealed one of the two oldest synagogues ever found. This synagogue was in use even while the Temple in Jerusalem still stood.

The fact that the Romans went to great lengths to extinguish every ember of Jewish rebellion is noteworthy. Thrust from Jerusalem, remnants of the rebellion of A.D. 66 resorted to isolated desert compounds. Quashing Jerusalem and most of Judaea did not entirely halt the rebellion in either the minds of the Romans or the Jews.

. . . their naive and daring belief that their actual physical existence, even in a remote part of Israel, embodied the independence of Judea. As long as they lived according to their beliefs, independent Judea existed and would continue to exist. What is amazing is that the Romans believed this also! That is what motivated the Romans to conquer Masada at any cost.²⁹²

Far from being mere refuges, the zealots would continue to wage a guerrilla war with the Romans if not addressed decisively in whatever place to which they resorted. The resistance of the Jews to subjection by foreign powers is well established in biblical and secular history.

. . . no fewer than four major revolts — that of the Maccabees in 167-164 B.C.E. [before common era], the First Jewish Revolt against Rome in 66-73 C.D. [common era], the war of

²⁹¹ Nachman Ben-Yehuda, "Where Masada's Defenders Fell," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 6, November-December 1998, p. 39.

²⁹² Ze'Ev Meshel, "Governments-In-Exile," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 6, November-December 1998, p. 50.

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Quietus in 115-117 C.E. and the Bar-Kokhba rebellion of 132-135 C.E. (also known as the Second Revolt against Rome).²⁹³

²⁹³ Louis H. Feldman, "The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 21, No. 1, January-February 1995, p. 10.

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Hundreds (332 specifically) of Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The mathematical probability of all those prophecies being completely fulfilled in by one person is a fraction of one over an 84 followed by 97 zeros.²⁹⁴

Many cities, rivers, lakes and seas, and mountains had the same names during the life of Jesus Christ as they did hundreds of years before. For instance, the names for the city of Jerusalem, the Jordan River, the Mediterranean Sea and Mount Hermon were unchanged. Other sites previously noted in this study, though, changed names by the time Jesus was born. Remember that the Sea of Galilee was at various times called by other names, too. The names of the tribes also disappeared from Palestine and were replaced with the names Judaea, Samaria and Galilee. Still other places had the same names before and during the life of Christ, but are emphasized here because of their importance to the ministry of Jesus.

The Roman Empire ruled the known world during the life and ministry of our Lord, and was divided into provinces, similar to states. In Canaan, three provinces were west of the Jordan River; they were Judaea on the south, Samaria just north of Judaea and Galilee the northern most of these three. East of the Jordan River were two provinces, Peraea and Decapolis. The provinces west of the Jordan are of primary importance when studying the life of Christ.

Judaea was the largest province west of the Jordan

²⁹⁴ Free and Vos, pp. 241-242.

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River in Palestine. This land was formerly occupied by the tribes of Judah, Dan, Benjamin and Simeon. The Jews living in Judaea felt superior to their Jewish brethren in Galilee. It was in Judaea (especially in Jerusalem) that Jewish educational and cultural opportunities were most available.

Samaria was inhabited largely by descendants of Jews and Gentiles who intermarried following the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel by the nation of Assyria. The Jews hated the Samaritans. The chief city in the province of Samaria was the city by the same name. Mounts Ebal and Gerizim and Jacob's Well (at Sychar) where Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman are in the province of Samaria, too.

(J.W. McGarvey visited Jacob's Well in 1879. He noted in his *Lands of the Bible*²⁹⁵ that several other wells exist in the area and probably existed from antiquity, too. However, Jacob was compelled to dig a well that he could claim without engaging a dispute over water rights with the natives of the area.)

Instead of worshipping in Jerusalem, the Samaritans built a temple on Mt. Gerizim and worshipped there. Present day Samaritans possess an ancient manuscript of the Pentateuch that is estimated to be 1,500 years old.²⁹⁶

Today, there are less than 1,000 Samaritans. They live in Nablus at the base of Mt. Gerezim, and in Joppa. . . . The Samaritans believe in God and Moses, but they accept only the Torah, the five books of Moses, as Scripture. They believe that Mt. Gerezim is the true sanctuary of God, and even though they no longer have a temple on Gerezim, they still observe the Passover with animal sacrifices as in the days of Moses. They also celebrate Pentecost and the Feast of Booths

²⁹⁵ McGarvey, p. 283.

²⁹⁶ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 21.

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with pilgrimages to the summit of Gerezim.²⁹⁷

Galilee extended from south to north from Samaria to Phoenicia and was bounded by the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Jordan River on the east. Lower Galilee's fertile plains produced grain, whereas Upper Galilee's mountains were noted for olive trees. Jews of Judaea thought they were more holy than Galilean Jews because Galilee was between Samaritans on the south and Gentiles on the north; the Jews despised both Samaritans and Gentiles.

Jesus was reared in Nazareth of Galilee, which is about 80 miles north of Jerusalem. Further, eleven of the original twelve apostles were Galileans; only Judas was not from Galilee. Cana of Galilee was the city in which Jesus began his ministry by turning water into grape juice. Capernaum, a Galilean city on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee, became the Lord's home during his earthly ministry. The foundation of a synagogue in Capernaum has been found that dates back to the time of Christ. It was constructed from black basalt.²⁹⁸ Much of Christ's ministry took place in Galilee.

Excavation of the synagogue in Chorazin, two miles north of Capernaum, revealed . . .

. . . Moses' seat. When Jesus talked about the scribes sitting on Moses' seat, it was not a figurative expression. Each synagogue had a seat where the scribes sat and taught the Law.²⁹⁹

The city of Bethshan dated back to Old Testament times and was the city to which walls the bodies of King Saul and Jonathan were fastened (1 Samuel 31:10). In Jesus' day, Bethshan was the only one of the ten cities of Decapolis west of the Jordan River. About A.D. 200 a

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

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Roman theater, seating 5,000 was built there. That theater had the ignoble distinction of being the only theater in Palestine used for execution (i.e., Christians were thrown to lions there). The Roman Sixth Legion camped south of Bethshan, at which site stood a bronze bust of Emperor Hadrian. Hadrian ruled when the Jews revolted again in A.D. 132. A Roman mile marker citing the distance to Caesarea and Jerusalem survives here.³⁰⁰

Bethlehem, like Jerusalem, rests on top of the Central Mountain Range. The city of Bethlehem, only five miles south of Jerusalem, is best known as the birth place of Jesus Christ. Micah 5:2 prophesied the Messiah would be born there. Hundreds of years earlier the Old Testament character Ruth lived in Bethlehem. Samuel anointed David in this city.

The reason for which the family of Jesus was in Bethlehem at the time of his birth was to return to the ancestral family home for census (Luke 2:1-6). A similar Roman decree was issued toward Egypt in A.D. 104.³⁰¹

Despite claims to the contrary by some ill-informed critics, Jesus Christ was a historical figure. Early historians, including Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Lucian of Samosata and Josephus, acknowledge that Jesus Christ actually lived, was crucified and the founder of Christians.³⁰²

Additionally, archaeological evidence confirms that crucifixion was practiced in Palestine at the time the Bible indicates Jesus was crucified.

Crucifixion was first practiced in the East among the Assyrians and Persians long before the days of the Roman Empire. After the Romans crushed Spartacus' revolt in 71 B.C., they crucified 6,000 rebels. When Titus had Jerusalem under siege in 70 A.D., the

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

³⁰¹ Free and Vos, p. 242.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 243.

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Roman army crucified hundreds of Jews a day; this went on for several months.³⁰³

. . . when a victim was crucified, breathing soon became very difficult. The victim would try to support his body by pushing up on his nail-pierced feet, would gasp for air, and then die of suffocation within two or three hours. The Roman executioners learned that they could prolong the agony by nailing a little seat called a sedile on the front of the cross. The sedile was pointed to intensify the pain, but with this body support, the victim sometimes lingered for two or three days.³⁰⁴

Following the Six Days War in 1967, excavation of tombs around Jerusalem yielded several ossuaries (stone bone boxes).

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 . . .³⁰⁵

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

³⁰³ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 67.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

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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.³⁰⁶

Nazareth was an obscure town of Galilee about 80 miles north of Jerusalem. What little notice was paid to this town was uncomplimentary. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth before their travel to Bethlehem for taxation, and they returned to this town later. Nazareth was the boyhood home of Jesus.

Our Lord’s first two miracles were performed at Cana in Galilee. First, Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:1-11) and subsequently he healed the son of a nobleman, though the man’s son was in Capernaum (John 4:45-54). The Horns of Hattin is the traditional site (overlooking the Sea of Galilee from the west) of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.

Capernaum was on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee and the frequent residence of Jesus during his earthly ministry (Matthew 9:1; John 6:48). The apostles Matthew and Peter also lived in this city (Matthew 9:9; Mark 9:35).

Nain is a city in Lower Galilee and the place where Jesus healed a widow’s only son (Luke 7:11-16). Bethsaida is another city Jesus frequented. This city is at the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee in Peraea. It was once the home of Peter, Andrew and Philip (John 1:44; 12:21). Here Jesus healed a blind man (Mark 8:22-26) and outside town miraculously fed five thousand people (Matthew 14:13-21).

Caesarea Philippi lies at the base of Mount Hermon, northeast of the Sea of Galilee. Some students of the Bible cite this city as the place of the Transfiguration of Jesus.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

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The city of Bethany, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, is where Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha lived. It was here that Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave, and from this city Jesus departed to make his final entry into Jerusalem. After Jesus' resurrection, he made his Ascension to heaven from the Mount of Olives (about 2,500 feet above sea level), near Bethany. Our Lord visited several additional cities during his earthly ministry, including Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia. While in that region, Jesus healed the daughter of a "woman of Canaan" (Matthew 15:21-22).

Herod the Great built the city of Caesarea (not to be confused with Caesarea Philippi) on the Mediterranean coast. It became the seat of Roman government in Palestine. Further, it was an important seaport for Palestine, there being few harbors along the coast in Palestine.

Caesarea was very important in New Testament history. Philip lived here. Cornelius was converted here. Paul was imprisoned here for two years and set sail from this harbor for Rome. In later Christian history, when the emperor Constantine ordered 50 copies of the Bible made for churches, they were copied here at Caesarea.³⁰⁷

The first century Roman jail in Caesarea where the apostle Paul was held has been found.³⁰⁸

Following the death of Herod the Great, his kingdom was divided among Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Philip and Lysanius. Archelaus ruled Judaea and Samaria. Herod Antipas, who commanded John the Baptist to be beheaded, reigned over Galilee and Peraea. Philip was

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

³⁰⁸ Bonnie Rochman, "Imperial Slammer Identified," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 1, January-February 1998, p. 18.

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over land east of the Sea of Galilee. Lysanius reigned over an area north of Mt. Hermon and Damascus. Later, Judaea and Samaria were assigned to a procurator, who at the time of the crucifixion of Christ was Pontius Pilate. Still later, Herod Agrippa I was awarded virtually all the land governed by his grandfather, Herod the Great. This is the Herod who killed James the apostle and suddenly died after accepting praise as a god (Acts 12:1, 20-23). Herod Agrippa II was the Herod before whom Paul was brought by Festus (Acts 25-26).

Arabs constituted the Nabatean Kingdom which variously occupied the Negeb, northern Arabia, the Transjordan and as far as Damascus. Their greatest king was Aretas who resided in Damascus (2 Corinthians 11:32). Petra, south of the Dead Sea, was a Nabatean city cut out of red sandstone. The Nabatean Kingdom was absorbed by the Roman Empire in A.D. 105.

The city of Jerusalem was the focal point of Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fulfillment. Bethlehem was prophesied to be the birth place of the Messiah (Micah 5:2), which it was according to the Gospel records. Jerusalem, though, was the city from which the new kingdom was to issue forth, complete with new revelation (Isaiah 2:1-3). Consequently, Jesus Christ was sacrificed outside the walls of Jerusalem, subsequently resurrected and from the nearby Mt. of Olives Ascended to Heaven.

Interestingly, though Jesus vacated his tomb, the grave of the highpriest Caiaphas who condemned our Lord has been discovered. It was found in November 1990 about one mile south of Jerusalem. "...this is the only time the actual physical remains of a biblical person have been found."³⁰⁹

On the next Pentecost in Jerusalem the new kingdom began with power (Mark 9:1) and new revelation (Acts 2).

³⁰⁹ Bill J. Humble, "Soul-Stirring Exhibit," *Gospel Advocate*, Nashville, Vol. 142, No. 9, September 2000, p. 37.

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Acts Two records that Jews from 15 different nations were present in the audience on the birthday of the Lord's church. Through voluntary migration to pursue commercial interests and through involuntary circumstances of slavery, Jews for many centuries were dispersed throughout the known world. Excavations at several sites (including Phrygia, Egypt and Rome) verify a Jewish presence, often substantial settlements, outside Palestine for centuries before Acts Two.

According to the Divine prediction of Jesus, the new kingdom with its Gospel message spread outward from Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Samaria, 30 miles north of Jerusalem, received news of the new kingdom (church) especially through the labors of Philip (Acts 8). The blessings of the Gospel and membership in the church or kingdom extended to Gentiles, too, through the household and friends of Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10-11). Caesarea was 23 miles south of Mt. Carmel and 64 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It served as the Roman capital of Palestine. Another prominent city in Palestine in which the early church was active is Joppa. Previous to the construction of Caesarea, Joppa was the only seaport in Palestine. There the apostle Peter raised Dorcas from the dead.

Queen Candace, mentioned in Acts 8:27, was one of a dynasty of Queens referred to as Candace. Excavations in Nubia from 1908 to 1909 produced evidence of this royal line. Milk was provided the queen to promote obesity which her subjects viewed as a royal quality. A relief of such a queen resides in the British Museum.³¹⁰

³¹⁰ Free and Vos, p. 263.

Chapter 8: First Century Missionary Journeys

The conversion of a Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus provided the infant church with perhaps its most energetic apologist. Personally responsible for the imprisonment and death of Christians, once converted (read Acts 9, 22, 26), he devoted himself with the same zeal to the promotion of the Christian faith that he once destroyed. Outside Damascus, to which Saul had gone searching for Christians to incarcerate, 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 had returned to Tarsus in Asia Minor when Barnabas sought him. Tarsus was the capital of Cilicia situated at an important pass (Cilician Gates) on a trade route between the Fertile Crescent and Asia Minor. Together they traveled to Antioch of Syria. It was from there that the apostle Paul began his missionary journeys through which he and his companions took the Gospel to the Gentiles in Asia Minor and Europe.

This Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire in Paul's day (after Rome and Alexandria). It was on the Orontes River which flowed into the Mediterranean Sea. Sixteen miles away to the west, Seleucia served as

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the seaport city for Antioch. The apostle Paul, Barnabas and John Mark left Antioch on Paul's first missionary journey. They first sailed to the island of Cyprus. Paul and his team began their preaching tour by preaching in a synagogue in the city of Salamis on the eastern shore. They then traveled to the city of Paphos where they encountered a Jewish sorcerer named Elymas and the proconsul Sergius Paulus. An unusual miracle of causing blindness was performed upon Elymas. The government official converted to Christianity.

Some Bible critics doubted the title of proconsul attributed to Sergius Paulus in Acts 13:7 ("deputy"). Cyprus' status in the Roman Empire was changed from imperial province to the possession of the Roman Senate, with a corresponding change in governorship of the island. Archaeological evidence confirms that the New Testament correctly notes the type of government under which Cyprus was ruled when Paul was there.

Luke has been proved correct in calling Sergius Paulus "proconsul," not "propraetor." An inscription was found reading: "under Paulus, the proconsul," dating A.D. 52-53.³¹¹

From Cyprus, the missionaries sailed to Perga in Pamphylia in Asia Minor. This region is rugged and was notorious for lawlessness along the mountain trail. It was here that John Mark turned back. The rest of the party continued to Antioch of Pisidia.

Although the New Testament refers to "Antioch of Pisidia," the Romans had enlarged the province of Galatia in 25 B.C. and Antioch was now in this larger Galatia. . . . Antioch is about 275 miles east of Ephesus . . . the "main street" of the New Testament city. The paving stones are still in place, and some of the columns that once lined the street have

³¹¹ Unger, p. 32.

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been put back up. . . . The most interesting ruin in Antioch is the Church of Paul, which was built in the fourth century and is the earliest church [building] anywhere, as far as we know. . . . What makes this church especially important is that it was built over the ruins of the earlier Jewish synagogue where Paul once preached.³¹²

Next Paul traveled to Iconium, then to Lystra and Derbe. They then retraced their journey to Perga, from which they returned to Antioch of Syria.

Due to a disagreement regarding John Mark participating in the next missionary journey, Barnabas and John Mark sailed together to Cyprus. Paul, accompanied by Silas, departed Antioch of Syria for Asia Minor overland. They traveled through Tarsus, Derbe and Lystra. Paul and Silas also traveled through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia, making their way to the city of Troas in Europe. Subsequent cities visited included Samothrace, Neapolis, Philippi, Apollonia, Amphipolis, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Cenchrea and Ephesus. From Ephesus Paul sailed to Caesarea, from which he went to Jerusalem before returning to Antioch of Syria.

An amazing amount of historical ruins of past civilizations remain readily visible. Not every archaeological excavation is resigned to sites of doubtful identity and further defined solely by what artifacts may lie buried in the earth. For instance, the Athens of Paul's day can be visited today. Mars Hill, the Acropolis and the Parthenon could hardly be overlooked by any visitor to Athens.

Paul would also have seen the temple of Olympian Zeus not far from the acropolis. With 106 columns, this was the largest

³¹² Bill Humble, "Life Among the Ruins," *Gospel Advocate*, Nashville, Vol. 140, No. 12, December 1998, pp. 33-34.

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temple ever built in ancient Greece. The Athenians had been working on it for 500 years when Paul came to their city, and it would not be finished for another hundred years.³¹³

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.”³¹⁴

Paul’s third missionary journey primarily involved edifying the congregations that he established during his previous journeys. He visited churches in the provinces of Galatia and Phrygia on his way to the city of Ephesus, where he remained for three years. Later, Paul traveled to cities in the regions of Macedonia and Greece. Cities visited on Paul’s return trip included Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Trogyllium, Miletus, Coos, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais or Accho, Caesarea and Jerusalem.

Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire and the Roman capital of Asia Minor. “Ephesus is an uninhabited ruin today, but the antiquities and monuments are among the most impressive anywhere in the Roman world.”³¹⁵ The city intercepted the north-south trade route in western Asia Minor and sat at the beginning of the primary route to the interior of Asia Minor. One of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the Temple of Diana, was also in Ephesus. The 25,000 seat theater into which the mob drew Paul’s companions is

³¹³ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 131.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

³¹⁵ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 127.

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still there (Acts 19:29).

The apostle Paul's final recorded journey was as a prisoner to Rome to appear before the emperor. Captured in Jerusalem by Roman soldiers upon the unrest of the Jewish mob against Paul, he was later taken to Caesarea for his own protection. On the way, he was taken through Antipatris. For two years Paul was prisoner at Caesarea, during which he made his defense before Festus and Agrippa. From Caesarea to Rome, the ship on which Paul was a prisoner sailed to Sidon, Myra in Asia Minor, Fair Havens in Crete before being shipwrecked on the island of Malta. From there Paul and his captors traveled to Italy, passing through Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli, Appii Forum, Three Taverns to Rome.

Herod built a large fortress at the northwest corner of the temple mountain and named it Antonio . . . When a mob tried to kill Paul in Acts 21, he was rescued by soldiers and taken into this fortress. And Jesus may have been condemned to death here.³¹⁶

Paul's journeys were replete with evangelistic successes and sometimes dismal failures upon the part of Jews especially and Gentiles to hearken to the Gospel call. The Book of Acts details these activities of the apostle Paul largely in the latter half of the volume. Everywhere Paul went he either enjoyed a great Gospel meeting or caused a riot. The pure Gospel of Christ in stark contrast to the wickedness of men, boldly and unapologetically proclaimed, penetrated the very depths of its auditors. The responses were dependent upon the quality and integrity of the hearers (Acts 2:37; 7:54).

Jews from Asia Minor were present on the birthday of the church in Acts 2:9, and likely carried the Gospel message back to their homes soon afterward. Prominent congregations in chief cities in Asia Minor where Paul had

³¹⁶ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, Nashville, p. 74.

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labored became the addressees for a message from Jesus through the apostle John. Asia Minor was a Roman province comprising “. . . an area of about 56,000 square miles or slightly larger than Arkansas.”³¹⁷ Near the end of the first century, seven churches of Asia were addressed in Revelation chapters Two and Three. “. . . [T]he letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 are arranged in the order that a messenger would have visited the seven cities.”³¹⁸ Only two congregations, Smyrna and Philadelphia, escaped rebuke. Additionally, churches were addressed in the cities of Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea. Islam, borne by the sword out of Arabia, later overpowered Christianity in Asia Minor and the seven churches of Asia were no more.

It has been estimated that the total population of Asia may have been [sic] reached 4.6 million by the second century A.D. Asia may have been the wealthiest province in the Roman Empire in New Testament times. The valleys along the rivers were fertile, and Asia produced cereals, grapes, fruit and nuts. The area was rich in building materials including good timber, fine marble and building stone. Although the gold and silver of earlier centuries had been depleted, lead and other minerals were still being mined.³¹⁹

In the first century, Smyrna had a population of about 100,000. Like many ancient cities, little archaeological excavation is possible since a modern city sits on top of the ancient site. The first temple for an emperor was built in this city. In A.D. 155, Polycarp, a contemporary of the apostle John, was martyred at Sardis. When called upon to renounce Jesus and confess the emperor, Polycarp

³¹⁷ Humble and Fair, p. 17.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

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said: “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?”³²⁰ Polycarp was burned at the stake.

A remarkable part of this is the role played by the Jews. The records say that they helped to bring the wood to build the fire, even though it was the Sabbath day when it happened.³²¹

The ancient ruins of Philadelphia lie under a modern city today, effectively inhibiting archaeological excavation. Philadelphia was one of only two of the seven churches of Asia that received no censure. Philadelphia was the last of the cities cited in Revelation 2-3 to fall to Islam, surviving almost another 200 years.

The first biblical mention of Ephesus is in Acts 18. Ephesus was a walled city of about 250,000 people in the New Testament era.³²² The apostles Paul and John resided in Ephesus. John lived in Ephesus following his exile on the island of Patmos and later died in Ephesus. The Temple of Diana (Artemis) in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

The city of Pergamum voluntarily became a Roman possession in 133 B.C. to spare itself the inevitable and devastating conquest by Rome as it expanded its power. Consequently, it became the capital of Asia Minor for 250 years. Pergamum was a center of emperor worship in Asia Minor. “By the end of the first century, when Revelation was written, emperor worship was a life-and-death challenge to Christians and provided the historical context for Revelation.”³²³ “Just a few years after John wrote Revelation, the people of Pergamum built a great temple in honor of the Emperor Trajan.”³²⁴ Pergamum

³²⁰ Humble and Fair, p. 44.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

³²² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

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also built the second largest library in the Roman Empire, second to Alexandria in Egypt. When the pharaoh refused to sell papyrus, Pergamum developed parchment (animal skins) on which to write. This development transformed literary expression from storage in scrolls to books (codex). At one time, the library in Pergamum contained 200,000 volumes.

Hides for making parchment were salted and treated with flour. To make the raw hide supple it was spread out in the street for passers-by to walk on. It was then beaten and treated with dog's dung, washed and thoroughly dried before being cut.³²⁵

Pergamum had a 10,000 seat theater, an aqueduct and one of the two largest hospitals in the ancient world. Further, Pergamum had three temples dedicated to emperors (i.e., Augustus, Trajan and Caracalla).³²⁶

Thyatira is noted twice in the Bible, once associated with the business woman, Lydia, and once as home to one of the seven churches of Asia. Thyatira was famous for a purple dye used there. Little excavation has occurred there since it, too, is an inhabited city today.

Trade guilds posed some hard choices for the Christians who lived there. If a Christian was going to work in a guild, he might be forced to go along with the guild's activities, including the immoral fertility rites and the pagan sacrifices. But if the Christian refused to go along, he might be without a job. As the church faced this problem, one party argued for compromise. They taught that even though Jesus was their Lord, it would still be all right to share in pagan sacrifices. This party was led by a woman called Jezebel, and

³²⁵ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.*

³²⁶ Humble and Fair, pp. 68-74.

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she is condemned in the strongest language in Revelation.³²⁷

Sardis has the distinction of being the first place where coins were minted and having one of the two largest buildings in the Greek Empire (a temple to Artemis). “In Sardis, archaeologists have discovered and restored the largest, ancient Jewish synagogue ever found.”³²⁸ It also served as the western headquarters for the Persians in their wars with Greece. Alexander the Great’s conquest of Sardis liberated Asia Minor from the control of the Persians and afterward crushed the Persian Empire. Greece, then, assumed control of the known world. The Greek culture was introduced into Asia Minor and throughout the Grecian Empire. The Greeks “. . . made deliberate efforts to Hellenize their territories.”³²⁹

Laodicea was renown for black wool. This city has been little excavated because it has been repeatedly completely destroyed and rebuilt, so that the ruins are displaced from the strata in which they belong. Further, when the modern city was built nearby, the ruins were carried away and used for building materials in that city.³³⁰ The church in Laodicea received only rebuke from Jesus and no commendation.

The Gospel records, the Book of Acts and the epistles comprise the New Testament. The language of the New Testament is called koine (common) Greek. “The **Koine** era embraces the span from about 330 B.C. to 330 A.D.”³³¹ At one time, critics of the Bible claimed that the Greek language of the New Testament contained many words exclusively used in the Bible — essentially made-up words or *biblical* words. One concluded that there were 550 such words in the New Testament that were not

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 19.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

³³¹ Jackson, *Bible Background Study*, p. 21.

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commonly used in the New Testament era. However, massive finds of ancient papyrus documents in Egypt prove that the language of the New Testament was the language ordinarily used daily in the first century. Further, the difference in grammar between the koine Greek of the New Testament and classical Greek pertains to changes that occurred over time. The New Testament is not written in poor grammar; it was written precisely in the prevailing grammar of the era in which it was penned.³³² Additionally, though once widely contested by critics of the Bible, archaeological discoveries have substantiated the early date of the New Testament books.

. . . the argument from historical grammar indicates that all New Testament books were written during the first century A.D. By way of review, this argument, based on discoveries in the papyri from Egypt, observes that the New Testament books as we have them are now known to have been written in the grammar and vocabulary of the popular Greek of the first century, not in the language of some subsequent period.³³³

³³² Free and Vos, pp. 249-250.

³³³ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

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The Model City, showing Jerusalem as it was in 66 A.D. shortly before its destruction by the Roman army, is located on the grounds of the Holyland Hotel in southwest Jerusalem. . . . The materials used were, as far as possible, the same materials that would have been used in the first century: limestone, marble, wood, iron, copper, etc. Whenever archaeologists discover new information about ancient Jerusalem, the Model City is changed to conform to the new insights. . . . The model is on a scale of one to 50, so the city is about one-third as long as a football field.³³⁴

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. Followers of Islam, Judaism and Christianity revere Jerusalem. For both religious and political reasons, Jerusalem continues to be the site of unrest and deadly battles. 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 (Genesis 14:18); it was here that the

³³⁴ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, pp. 79-80.

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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 of this study 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 (Isaiah 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.

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 (Jeremiah 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

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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.”³³⁵

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.

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 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.

The pool biblically known as the Pool of Bethesda is the only known natural year round fountain around Jerusalem. It is in the eastern side of the Hill of Ophel and is supplied by an unknown underground source. The stream entering this pool is not constant, but flows only

³³⁵ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 103.

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two or three times daily. Some people in Jesus' day believed the disturbance of the water by the start up of this inward flow was caused by an angel. They believed anyone in the water during this time would be healed of his diseases (John 5:1-4).

The Pool of Hezekiah fills from the Pool of Upper Gihon through a conduit running between the two pools. The conduit and Pool of Hezekiah were built by King Hezekiah to ensure an adequate water supply in Jerusalem when the city was being attacked and its people could not leave the city to obtain water. Upper Gihon is outside the city, whereas the Pool of Hezekiah is inside the city. Archaeological examination of this 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.³³⁶

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

Linear measurements were developed from the proportions of the human body, the finger, the palm, the span (distance from spread thumb to little fingertip), the cubit (distance from the elbow to the middle fingertip), and the rope or fathom was the distance from the tip of one middle finger to the other middle finger with the arms extended. This gives a table of length as follows: 4 fingers = 1 palm; 3 palms = 1 span;

³³⁶ Free and Vos, p. 39.

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2 spans = 1 cubit; 4 cubits = 1 fathom.³³⁷

Obviously, a cubit would vary some from person to person. To the extent that the stature differs between national or ethnic groups, of course, the cubit could vary, also. The cubit is employed in the Bible for the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:10ff) and Noah's Ark (Genesis 6:15-16), among other applications.

The Pool of Siloam is at the foot of the Hill of Ophel. This is the pool to which Jesus sent a blind man (John 9:7). Water from another pool flows into Siloam before flowing into the Kidron Valley.

Because Jerusalem was built on top of a mountain, most of the buildings are made from stone extracted from the mountainside. This city has been the center of attention for religious and political reasons for centuries. Jerusalem, therefore, is a unique city; it is an ancient, walled, mountain, capital city.

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."³³⁸

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

³³⁷ Gowers.

³³⁸ Craig Koester, "The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 1, January 1989 as quoted by Randall A. Weiss, *Jewish Sects of the New Testament Era*, Cedar Hill, TX, Cross Talk, 1994 [electronic book, page numbers not indicated].

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politically, was buried!³³⁹

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.³⁴⁰

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.³⁴¹

Josephus was himself the definition of paradox: a Jewish priest 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

³³⁹ Jackson, *Bible Background Study*, p. 89.

³⁴⁰ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 78, 86-87.

³⁴¹ McGarvey, p. 16.

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commissioning a statue of him.³⁴²

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.³⁴³ 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.³⁴⁴

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

³⁴² Steve Mason, "Will the Real Josephus Please Stand Up?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, Vol. 23, No. 5, September-October 1997, pp. 58-59.

³⁴³ McGarvey, *op. cit.*

³⁴⁴ Bonnie Rochman, "X Marked the Spot," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 5, September-October 1998, p. 22.

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years 1832 to 1840 when Egypt temporarily regained control. European nations, 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.”³⁴⁵

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.³⁴⁶

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

³⁴⁵ Humble, *The Bible Land: Walking Where Jesus Walked*, p. 73.

³⁴⁶ Hershel Shanks, “David’s Jerusalem,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 4, July-August, p. 25.

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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-dozer,” he said [Amir Dori, IAA Director].³⁴⁷

Solomon’s Temple was built on Mt. Moriah. However, the hill did not have a large enough summit to accommodate the planned structure. Therefore, Mt. Moriah was enlarged by constructing eastern, western and southern walls and 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.”³⁴⁸ 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

³⁴⁷ Bonnie Rochman, “Battle Over Archaeology in Israel Reaches a Boil,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 5, September-October 1998, p. 18.

³⁴⁸ McGarvey, p. 149.

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and the cave beneath it. The Dome of the Rock is the oldest Muslim shrine.³⁴⁹ The Mosque el Aksa also sits on top of Mt. Moriah. Excavations are not permitted, therefore, on the temple mount.

³⁴⁹ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 82.

Chapter 10: Rome Rules

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 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

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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.

The history of Rome and what became the Roman Empire predates its biblical treatment in the New Testament and its affect on Palestine. The city of Rome was founded in 753 B.C. by Romulus on one of seven hills (Palatine Hill) on the east bank of the Tiber River, fifteen miles from its mouth at the Tyrrhenian Sea. 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.

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

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(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.

When Augustus became emperor, he had 500,000 soldiers at his command; 300,000 of these he dismissed and settled in colonies. He further reorganized his forces and relied mostly on a professional, volunteer army. Augustus' army was formed from two main categories, legionaries and auxiliaries. Legionaries were Roman citizens, 6,000 to a legion, 25 legions in all. Auxiliaries were recruited from conquered peoples and amounted to about the same total number as the legionaries, only they were grouped in much smaller units. An inducement to enlistment for this latter group was Roman citizenship upon the conclusion of 25 years of service.

Still another military unit was the praetorian guard. Nine cohorts of 1,000 men each recruited from the peninsula of Italy served as personal bodyguards to the emperor. Unlike other troops, they were stationed at Rome. Their length of service was 16 years, whereas legionaries served for 20 years. Upon discharge, both praetorians and legionaries received bonuses, but the former were much better paid. The Roman Empire also had a fleet, however, which paled in importance compared to the land armies. The Roman government, though, also controlled the private shipping industry enough to guarantee sufficient quantity of food and resources for Rome and distribution to its armies. Another reason why the Roman navy was comparatively little used militarily is that Italy, though it has about 2,000 miles of coast, has few good harbors.

Census and subsequent taxation were the means by which Rome paid for the military and the expansion of the Empire by conquest. Such a census was decreed by

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Augustus about the time of the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1). This is the circumstance that caused Joseph and Mary to travel to their hometown of Bethlehem from their home in Nazareth. In A.D. 14, the year of the death of Augustus, a census numbered citizens in the Roman Empire at nearly five million.

It has been estimated that the Roman Empire contained 60 million slaves. A slave was not considered a person; rather, he was a “living tool” to be dealt with as his master pleased. Slaves occupied virtually every vocational level; they were doctors, teachers, secretaries and close friends of Emperors, etc.³⁵⁰

One of the principle ways in which successive emperors were chosen rested with the praetorian guard. This elite group of troops would select a successor which the senate felt compelled to ratify. Later, armies throughout the empire claimed the same right to select a successor to a deceased emperor and rivals often competed in military conflicts, supported by their respective armies.

Life in Rome was accompanied by numerous carnivals and entertainment. The holidays during which these amusements were pursued increased to 135 annually. The events included chariot races, gladiatorial combats and the theater. Those were prosperous times for Rome which resulted from international traders flocking there, the establishment of military highways, suppression of piracy and a single currency for the entire empire.

Many Jews migrated to Rome after the Roman Empire conquered Palestine. They, however, lived in their own section, just outside the city on the west bank of the Tiber. (The Greeks and the Syrians also had their sections in which they lived.) The Jews were allowed to practice their Jewish faith and culture without restriction. Many

³⁵⁰ Jackson, *Bible Background Study*, p. 65.

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Jews were also made freedmen.

When the Lord's church was established in Jerusalem, the Gospel began to spread slowly throughout the Roman Empire, including Rome. This occurred as a result of the presence of about 15 nationalities of Jews in Jerusalem when the Gospel was first preached (Acts 2:9-11). Initially, 3,000 Jews were converted to Christianity. After a while, those who lived in foreign lands and were converted returned to their homes; there they told others of the Gospel. Some of the Jews present in Jerusalem in Acts Two were inhabitants of Rome (verse 10), possibly some of which were also converted and who later returned to Rome. Biblical evidence attests to the vigor with which Jewish converts spread their new faith (Acts 8:4).

It is quite possible that a dissension arose between Jews and Jewish Christians in Rome; this may be the reason all Jews were commanded by Claudius to leave Rome (Acts 18:2). The Gentiles were likely unable or not interested in discerning the difference between practitioners of the Jewish faith and Jewish Christians; the early church was solely Jewish. Judaism was at that time divided into different sects (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots), and for all Imperial Rome knew or cared, Christians were merely another sect of Judaism. Claudius made no distinction between Jews and Christians in his decree; Christians had to leave also.

In ancient Rome, Christians were officially classified as a Jewish sect among other Jews. One example of this fact is seen in that as early as the middle of the first century, Rome expelled the Christians along with all the other Jewish residents. Their welcome came "to an end with Claudius's edict in A.D. 49. Christian and non-Christian Jews alike were

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expelled from the city.”³⁵¹

“Talmudic literature states that there were 24 sects in Israel.”³⁵²

Additionally, the church and Gospel in ancient Rome were confronted with government encouraged and widely practiced idolatry. Ultimately, because Christians refused to worship the state gods, they were viewed as atheists and punished or executed. In time, living emperors considered themselves gods and demanded worship; the Christian refusal was viewed as treason and sufficient cause for punishment and death. After Nero burned Rome (A.D. 64.), Christians who were already despised by their pagan neighbors were accused of the crime. Subsequently, Christians were punished and killed.

In spite of unpopularity of the Gospel and finally severe persecution of Christians, many Jews and Gentiles as well were converted by the Gospel. Eventually, the church at Rome appears to have been dominated primarily by Gentile Christians (Romans 1:13; 11:13) with a large Jewish minority also.

The apostle Paul was likely the first apostle to arrive in Rome. For, it was to Nero Paul appealed and to whom he was sent (Acts 25:11). In Paul’s day, Rome was probably a large, irregular mass of buildings, unprotected by an outer wall; the city outgrew its previous wall of defense. Streets were winding and narrow, flanked by tall apartment houses; Augustus placed a limit of 70 feet on such buildings because they were poorly constructed and subject to collapse. Many modern day ruins of Rome noticed by travelers had not been built yet in Paul’s day.

The city was populated by as much as one half with slaves; each palace and plantation had from hundreds to

³⁵¹ F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, NY, 1980, p. 299 as quoted in *Jewish Sects of the New Testament Era*.

³⁵² David Flusser, *The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect*, MOD Books, Tel-Aviv, 1989, p. 15 – as quoted in *Jewish Sects of the New Testament Era*, p. 11.

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thousands of slaves. Many masters freed their slaves, especially at the owner's death. Others were freed upon the purchase of their citizenship. The larger number of the remaining population was impoverished and supported by welfare. A middle class was wholly absent; the balance of citizens were the few wealthy nobles of Rome.

As the apostle approached Rome, he was taken along the highway called the Appian Way (Acts 28:15). Upon his first imprisonment, Paul lived in his own rented house for two years, though he was chained to a Roman guard (Acts 28:16, 20, 30). His house was either near the emperor's palace or Paul otherwise had association with people attached to the palace (Philippians 1:13; 4:22). Though not documented by Bible evidence, secular testimony uniformly acknowledges a second imprisonment of the apostle, possibly under the reign of Nero, at which time he was executed. About this time, other Christians were also killed for their faith. They were wrapped in animal skins and killed by dogs, robed with clothes wetted with flammable liquids and set on fire for light or crucified.

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

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Christians thought and believed.³⁵³

Though the Roman Empire had its beginning hundreds of years earlier, it first conquered Palestine when the general Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 B.C. From 40-37 B.C., Jerusalem was wrested from Rome by a rival nation (the Parthians). Again captured in 37 B.C., Jerusalem remained militarily subject to Rome throughout and beyond the biblical record. Herod the Great was installed as the King of the Jews by Rome and ruled from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. when Jesus was born. Other Roman appointees served in Palestine during New Testament times.

The first Roman Emperor, Octavian, Augustus Caesar, ruled at the time of our Lord's birth (Luke 2:1). The Roman Emperor at the time of Jesus' crucifixion was Tiberius (A.D. 14-37). Caligula (A.D. 37-41) reigned during the time of the Book of Acts; Claudius (A.D. 41-54) and Nero (A.D. 54-68) ruled contemporary with the life of the apostle Paul. Trajan (A.D. 98-117) was emperor when the apostle John was banished to Patmos. "The age of New Testament history was spanned by eleven different Caesars."³⁵⁴

In A.D. 66, Judaea revolted against Roman rule. This was brought about by several factors: (1) heavy taxation, (2) the murder of Jews in Caesarea (Roman capital of Judaea) by Greeks, (3) murder of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem by Jews, and chiefly (4) Jewish nationalism which the Jews viewed as identical to the free practice of their religion. After subsequent Jewish victories over Roman armies that were sent to stop the uprising, Vespasian, a Roman general, was dispatched in A.D. 67 with 50,000 troops to re-conquer Judaea. After he defeated the rest of Palestine, Vespasian laid siege to Jerusalem in A.D. 70., but withdrew to become emperor after his troops selected him to that position. However,

³⁵³ Free and Vos, pp. 298-299.

³⁵⁴ Jackson, *Bible Background Study*, p. 83.

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his predecessor was still reigning and surrendered in effect when he was slain in battle. Vespasian entrusted his army on Judaeian soil to his son Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem and put down the Jewish rebellion.

Chapter 11: City of Commerce and Corruption

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.

In the sixth century B.C., the diolkos was built to transport smaller ships across the isthmus without having to unload them. The diolkos was a stone roadway. Smaller vessels were taken out of the water, dragged across the diolkos on roller-like skids, and then launched again at the opposite port. Remains of the diolkos still survive and have been uncovered by archaeologists.³⁵⁵

Because of its commercial significance, Corinth was called the "eye of Greece." "Corinth was located on a narrow isthmus between the Saronic Gulf and the Gulf of Corinth, and this gave the city one of the most strategic

³⁵⁵ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 142.

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locations in the ancient world.”³⁵⁶

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. Whereas Athens, about 46 miles north of Corinth, was noted for its culture, Corinth was widely known for every manner of corruption and evil. Citizens of Corinth were viewed as dishonest and immoral. To call one a Corinthian was to charge him with base immoralities.

In Paul’s day Corinth was a Roman Colony, built by

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

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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. 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.

The value of a canal through the isthmus was realized hundreds of years ago; Nero attempted to have a canal cut through the rock beginning in about A.D. 66. He, however, abandoned the project due to the great difficulty involved and the costly nature of this undertaking. In more recent history, a canal was successfully carved through the isthmus and completed in 1893. The canal is four miles long, 75 feet wide and 26 feet deep. At one point, the rock had to be cut 260 feet deep from its surface to the depth required.

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.

Two New Testament epistles that were written by the apostle Paul to the church meeting in that city have been preserved. 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

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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.

Chapter 12: Customs of the Biblical World

We are fortunate that the life–style of the “people of the Book” has remained fairly stable for hundreds of years and that even in the twentieth century people can visit the lands of the Bible and see things that were happening centuries ago. The life–style of the people has also been recorded in words and artifacts, in pictures, and even in the rubbish of the past. It is through the study of such sources that it is possible to recapture something of how things were in Bible times.³⁵⁷

Among noticeable differences in culture from Bible times to the present is the clothing worn then versus now. The clothes worn by men and women were similar; often they wore a wool tunic, a loose fitting gown, extending to the knees or even to the ankles and secured with a belt. Another robe-like garment was worn over this. “The woman’s outer raiment was longer than the man’s, with a border and fringe which covered even the feet.”³⁵⁸ These clothes concealed the human form and provided protection from the weather. Clothes were considered prized possessions and were sometimes used as collateral (Proverbs 20:16).

The tunic was the essential garment. It was made from two pieces of material, seamed so that the seam came horizontally, at waist

³⁵⁷ Gowers.

³⁵⁸ Jackson, *Bible Background Study*, p. 47.

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level. When stripes were woven into the material on the loom, they fell vertically in the finished article. In many respects the tunic was like a sack. A V-shaped opening was cut for the head, and slits were made in the two corners for the arms. A new tunic was normally sold without the V-opening so that it could be proved to be new. The material could be of wool, linen, or even cotton, according to the wealth of the wearer. Tunics made of sackcloth, or goat's hair, were very uncomfortable because they caused skin irritation. They were therefore worn in times of mourning and repentance. . . . The tunic was held to the waist by a girdle made of leather or coarse cloth. . . . When men needed freedom to work or for running, they lifted the hem of the tunic and tucked it into the girdle to gain greater freedom of movement. It was called "girding up the loins," and the phrase became a metaphor for preparedness. Peter, for example, commends clear thinking, by advising Christians to "gird up the loins" of their minds (1 Peter 1:13, KJV).³⁵⁹

Both men and women also wore leather sandals which were designed more for practical use than appearance. The enclosed heel of the sandal was held in place by a piece of leather encircling the ankle before attaching to the front of the sandal, between the first and second toes. Since roads were unpaved and dusty and people wore sandals, the custom developed that a well mannered host provided his guest with water and towel to wash his feet upon entrance to his home. A greater measure of hospitality included having a servant wash the feet of guests, whereas a demonstration of humility was possible when the host himself washed the feet of his guests. To

³⁵⁹ Gowers.

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“shake off the dust of your feet” (Matthew 10:14) is understood more easily, knowing the type of footwear worn in Bible times along dusty roads. See Genesis 18:3-5; Luke 7:37-38, 44 and John 13:4-14 concerning this custom.

Techniques for tanning leather progressed over time. Animal hides were used early as clothes to cover and protect the human form.

Raw hides and skins were most probably the earliest form of covering for the human body, and the large variety of flint scrapers and burins found in quantities on prehistoric sites were no doubt used to treat hides. To prevent decay they had to be ‘cured.’ In the earliest periods (and even in primitive societies today) they were tanned merely by being salted and then dried in the sun. It was only later that antiseptics were used. The hide was prepared for tanning by being washed and scraped to remove any dirt, hair and flesh still adhering to it. A tannery has been discovered in Egypt and this has revealed the materials used in the tanning process. The tanning agents were vegetables *Acacia arabica willd.* and *Acacia nilotica desf.* Some tomb paintings show that the hide was soaked in a pot, then placed to dry and worked on a wooden tripod. The leather was softened by being soaked in oil and thinned by being beaten with a wooden hammer. It was then ready to be used for making footwear, parts of garments, covers for shields, tents for the army and so on. It could also be dyed.

Skins (Lev. 11:2; 15:17), shoes (Amos 2:6) and the oiling of leather are referred to in the Bible, and Adam and Eve wore coats of skins

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(Gen. 3:21); but it tells us little about the method used for producing leather. The craft is referred to in the New Testament however: Acts (9:43) records that Peter stayed with Simon the tanner in Joppa. The Mishna and the Talmud offer a great deal more information about tanning. Here too we are told that the hide was washed, beaten in water to get the dirt off, flayed and soaked in water containing oak-galls or sumach (leaves from a type of shrub). . . . In the Judean Desert Caves sandals, belts and bags made of leather were found. A tanner was not accepted in society because of the stench of the materials that he had to handle and the carcasses that he was forced to touch. . . . The Law also required that a tannery be built well away from the town, on the east, the side away from the prevailing wind.³⁶⁰

Leather was also used to form bottles (Mark 2:22) to contain liquid. Hence, some of these containers are called wineskins.

The skins of both the kids and the full-grown animals are still used for bottles to hold water, milk, and other liquids. When intended for this purpose they are stripped from the carcass of the animal as near whole as possible; they are tanned with the hair on; all the openings but one are closed up water-tight; and that one (usually at the extremity of a leg) is used as a spout into which the liquid is poured, and through which it is drawn out. The full skin, with all its openings closed by strings tied tightly around them, is swung across a man's shoulders, or two of

³⁶⁰ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.*

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them are strapped opposite each other on the sides of an ass, and thus the water is carried over considerable distances. The water is forced out by untying one of the legs and pressing your foot on the side of the skin. This is the only way in which water is carried by men. If in jars, it is always carried by women, and usually on their heads. These skins are used not only as milk-vessels, but as churns. It is easy to agitate the milk in them, either by working your foot up and down on the skin as it lies on the ground, or by tying it to the limb of a tree and swinging it up and down until the butter is made. They are easily turned inside out for cleansing and drying.³⁶¹

In ancient times, jewelry was worn by men and women. These adornments included earrings, necklaces, rings, bracelets and nose jewels.

The simplest homes found in small villages were made of a combination of mostly stone and sun dried mud brick. With walls and pillars of stone, wooden beams over top of these were themselves overlaid with pieces of wood, brush and clay.

The roof was constructed by laying brushwood across rough sycamore beams and binding them together by using mud. . . . Roofs were not watertight and therefore had two characteristics — leaks and a green colour. . . . The roofs were green because the seeds in the mud (natural and from drying out grain) sprouted. This is mentioned in 2 Kings 19:26; Psalm 129:6; and Isaiah 37:27.³⁶²

³⁶¹ McGarvey, pp. 64-65.

³⁶² Gowers.

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Wood is used only where it is indispensable. In the stone houses the doors and windows are often the only parts made of wood, though sometimes wooden joists are employed to support the second floor. The walls of the better class of stone houses are built of hewed stone, but those of the inferior class are built of rough stones picked up from the surface of the earth and laid in a large amount of mortar. The mortar used is often little more adhesive than mud.³⁶³

. . . characteristics of dwellings in the Holy Land. First they have a typical shape and style of building. They tend to be squarish, with a flat roof and external staircase, and are often built of white limestone blocks. This has become the pattern because of climate, availability of building materials, and an original need to build so as to conserve space.³⁶⁴

In times of peace and a strong central government, homes often had no doors, only doorways and curtains. During political instability, homes were fortified with strong wooden doors set in sockets.³⁶⁵ Inside, the ceiling was about six feet high (lower where the beams crossed). Two rooms of unequal portion did not afford either privacy or personal space. Built for shelter rather than luxury, these homes were without furniture except for stone stools. Then as now, prosperity affected the lavishness of one's furnishings.

The furniture of a private house in the biblical period was austere, consisting of a bed, a table and chairs (2 Kgs. 4:10). Most

³⁶³ McGarvey, p. 102.

³⁶⁴ Gowers.

³⁶⁵ Free and Vos, p. 57.

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people slept on the floor or on a mud-brick bench, using their garments both as mattress and blanket (1 Sam 28:23). Only the upper classes could afford real beds. Many beds have been discovered in Egypt, consisting of four metal legs attached to a flat wooden surface on which a sheet of linen was spread. They were then piled high with cushions and sometimes steps were needed to mount them. The Egyptians slept with their heads on a raised support; the Assyrians, on the other hand, preferred to lay their heads on a soft pillow. In the Holy Land, too, beds were used by kings and wealthy people (1 Sam. 19:15–16; 2 Sam. 4:7).³⁶⁶

The principle light came from oil lamps. “Large trees in a good season yield from ten to fifteen gallons of oil . . .”³⁶⁷

The lamp, in the form of a small clay bowl in which oil was burned, was the most common form of domestic lighting from very early times. As olive oil was plentiful in Palestine, this was the fuel normally used in lamps (cf. Exod. 27:20; Lev. 24:2); the wick was usually made of flax (Isa. 42:3). According to the Mishna (Shabb. 2:1–3) a much greater variety of oils was used for lighting in the Roman period, including oils extracted from sesame seeds, nuts, horseradish and vegetable resins: naphtha (an inflammable oil, obtained by dry distillation of coal, shale, etc.) is also mentioned. The shapes of lamps, and the materials from which they were made, are never specified in the Bible, but clay lamps are among the most common pottery vessels

³⁶⁶ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.*

³⁶⁷ McGarvey, p. 56.

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found in the archaeological remains, both in dwellings and in tombs. Since they were very simple and cheap household utensils their shape was not influenced by fashion as much as that of other pottery vessels. They do, however, constitute an important aid to dating.³⁶⁸

Though rainwater was directed from a cistern to inside the house, cooking was largely performed outside. (Toiletry needs were also taken care of outside, some distance from the dwelling.) Cooking in Palestine and the Arab world from the antiquity to the near present was a primitive exercise, the likes of which America is largely unfamiliar.

Heating and cooking were done by fire, using natural combustible materials such as dried animal manure (Ezekiel 4:15), sticks, dried grass (Matthew 6:30), thorn bushes (2 Samuel 23:7; Isaiah 10:17) and charcoal (John 21:9). . . . Fire was kindled by flint or by friction.³⁶⁹

Their fuel consists of broken pieces of brush, of coarse weeds, or of dried manure; and more frequently of the last than of either of the others . . . The manure from cows, donkeys, and horses is all carefully gathered up by the village women, patted out into round cakes about six inches in diameter and one inch thick, and then either laid out on top of the house or stuck against the wall of the house to dry. These cakes when dried are used as chips for boiling the kettle, frying the meat, or heating the bake-oven. The ovens are little conical structures, made of mud and

³⁶⁸ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.*

³⁶⁹ Gowers.

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smoothly plastered both inside and out. An opening in one side enables the woman to put in the fuel and build the fire, and also rake out the fire when the oven is hot, and to put in the bread. The odor of these ovens is what might be expected. The loaves of bread, made up of unbolted flour, in shape and size about like the “chips” with which the oven is heated, dark, soft, and tough, are palatable when you are hungry and have nothing else to eat.³⁷⁰

The manner in which the ancient inhabitants of the Bible lands ate their food prevails in many cultures today that are foreign to western civilization. Missionaries to some distant fields of labor report that the following observation remains current.

In a simple home there was a common food pot, placed on a rug, and the family sat cross-legged around the pot. A piece of thin bread was used to scoop out the contents. When Ruth ate with the reapers, she was invited to eat in this way (Ruth 2:14).³⁷¹

Food for the family is usually served in large trays placed on low stands in the midst of the floor. Those who partake sit on the floor around it and help themselves. The fingers are used instead of knives and forks. Spoons, both of metal and wood, are used as occasion requires.³⁷²

The evening meal had to be prepared on the fire for the men when they returned from work. This normally consisted of vegetables

³⁷⁰ McGarvey, pp. 114-115.

³⁷¹ Gowers.

³⁷² McGarvey, p. 117.

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or a lentil stew (Genesis 25:29, 34; Daniel 1:12), which was scooped out of the common pot with a piece of thin bread.³⁷³

Judaism contained many stipulations that pertained to personal hygiene. One such law pertained to the washing of hands associated with eating meals.

Before meals were eaten the hands were always washed under running water because there were no utensils such as knives, forks, and spoons. . . . By New Testament times this had become something of a ritual. Jesus reacted against the mere ritualization of the practice (Mark 7:1–8). . . . The hands were also washed at the end of the meal.³⁷⁴

No matter how humble a man's home, on the inside hospitality became the honor and responsibility of the host. Travelers yet experienced this type of hospitality in the late 1800s.

While under the roof of one of them a stranger is safe, and the murder of one who has eaten salt with them is unknown. They will not even rob a man who has been their guest until at least three days afterwards, and if he is under the protection of the tribe they will defend him with their lives.³⁷⁵

Patriarchs and other nomads often dwelt in tents instead of permanent houses. The Arab Bedouins viewed by J.W. McGarvey in 1879, like much of the rest of the region then, doubtless approximated the living conditions in antiquity. McGarvey described these tents.

They consist of long strips of black hair-cloth suspended on rude stakes from five to six feet

³⁷³ Gowers.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ McGarvey, pp. 83-84.

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high, with one side-curtain to keep out cold winds or the afternoon sun. The tent-cloth is a very coarse texture, woven by hand from the hair of the black goats, and it has a very gloomy appearance; but it is impervious to rain and it makes a fine shade. In cold weather a fire is built before the open front of the tent, the fuel being brush, roots, weeds, or the dried ordure [dung] of the cattle. When the last material is burned an offensive odor is diffused through the atmosphere for a great distance around. Within these tents are spread the hair-mats and heavy strips of carpet on which the family sit during the day and sleep during the night. In the corners are stacked the other household effects. In one end are frequently huddled some calves or some motherless kids or lambs; while the dogs and chickens occupy whatever vacant spaces they can find. The tents vary in length from 15 to 40 feet, and are usually no wider than 8 or 10 feet. Many are not tall enough for a person to stand erect in them, except in the immediate vicinity of the taller stakes. They are usually pitched in groups of half a dozen or more, but sometimes an encampment is seen containing 30 or 40 tents.³⁷⁶

These were not tents with which we are familiar, as their tents are open on one side and divided into two rooms by a tent wall. They afforded no privacy, but merely shielded their users from the elements.

Larger villages and cities, particularly among wealthier citizens, boasted somewhat more elaborate homes. Especially in the cities, buildings often were built on to each other and a second story might overhang the

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

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narrow streets. Since Canaan is mountainous and rocky in many places and trees are less abundant, stone is the chief material for building construction throughout the area. Often people chose to sleep on the roofs of their homes to enjoy the cool evening.

All the better class of city buildings are two stories high. They are built compactly against each other, no open spaces being left except the streets . . . Such a thing as a yard about a house is unknown. The lower stories are usually occupied for business purposes of some kind, and the upper stories by the families. . . . The space left for streets is very narrow, often not more than six feet, and seldom more than twelve. . . . The narrowness of the streets was intended for the double purpose of keeping out the hot rays of the sun and of economizing space within the walls of a city. The former purpose is still further secured by covering the streets in many places with matting stretched across on poles from the roofs of the houses on either side, and sometimes by turning arches of stone across the streets from the walls of the houses. Sometimes these arches serve the additional purpose of supporting rooms above them which are connected with the houses. In all such places the streets are considerably darkened . . .³⁷⁷

In Old Testament times, streets ran off the market. They were so narrow that it was possible only for people to walk in single file. The houses were built hard up against each other and the “street” was the space left between. From the street led equally narrow

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

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alleys to gain access to areas behind (Proverbs 7:8). This system created a network so complex it was almost impossible for a newcomer to know so that he could find his way about. The streets were unpaved and were full of rubbish — mud bricks, broken pottery, and refuse — often higher than the floor level of the houses themselves.³⁷⁸

Walled cities offered their citizens a measure of protection from wild animals, bands of robbers and unfriendly foreign powers. These walls were as much as 30 feet thick and 50 feet high and made of stone. Rising from the walls were towers as well.

The busiest place in the city of Palestine was the gate or gates. It was here the elders transacted legal matters, travelers arrived and departed, and much commerce transpired. Stone ledge seats were often built into the gate area. The gate was also of strategic military importance, both to defenders and potential attackers. Therefore, many cities used a six-chambered gate to complicate its siege by an invading army and enable a better defense. These chambers were used in peacetime as meeting rooms.

A city gate is not a mere opening in the wall, with a heavy shutter to close it; but it is a square tower, usually twenty or thirty feet square, and projecting beyond the wall both without and within. The outer entrance is through one side of the tower, and the inner through the side at right angles to it; so that after entering the tower you turn either to the right or the left — usually to the left — to enter the city. This made it more difficult for an enemy to force his way into the city, and it prevents one who is outside from seeing in or

³⁷⁸ Gowers.

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shooting in when the gate is open.³⁷⁹

One early design for providing that protection called for building overlapping walls with two gates, forming a courtyard between. Another was to build walls at right angles to the main walls, again forming a courtyard. If the outer gate was penetrated there was still another, and in the meantime the defenders could pour down liquids and shoot down things on the attackers in the courtyard below. . . . The gates became still more sophisticated when the two pairs of gates were made at 90 degrees to each other so that the attacking soldiers had to make a turn. The gates were arranged so that the attackers had to turn left. This exposed their right-hand side, which was not covered with a shield, to the defenders above.³⁸⁰

Cleanliness and washing of clothes varied among the inhabitants of Palestine. The minority and especially settled peoples permitted themselves a greater degree of cleanliness, personally and regarding their clothing. The masses were not afforded or cared less for cleanliness. To the present, multitudes in many cultures concern themselves little about cleanliness.

Clothes were cleaned by allowing the swift current of a stream to pass through the coarse-woven cloth, washing the dirt out and away, or else by placing the wet clothes on flat stones and pounding out the dirt.³⁸¹

They have no wash-tubs or wash-boards, and they use no hot water or soap. Beside the

³⁷⁹ McGarvey, p. 106.

³⁸⁰ Gowers.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

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spring or pool where the washing is done they are provided with smooth, flat stones, on which they lay the garment, after dipping it in the water, and pound it with a smaller stone or with a heavy wooden paddle, dipping and pounding alternately, until the process is completed. This, with a little rubbing in the hands, is the entire process of washing. . . . Until a better supply of fuel is obtained, the use of hot water must continue to be limited, and also the eating of warm food.³⁸²

Cattle, sheep and goats were a primary resource of ancient agriculture, especially among nomadic people, such as the Patriarchs.

The sheep of the country are all of the large-tailed Syrian variety. They are of ordinary size, and have wool of ordinary quality, their chief distinction being their long and heavy tails of pure fat. These are from ten to fifteen inches in length, and from three to five inches in diameter. The fat is fried from them and used for culinary purposes. . . . The goats of Palestine are uniformly black, though many of them have some white spots and rings. . . . The hair of the goat is also of some value, and it is used by the people almost as much as the wool of the sheep. It is twisted into ropes for tethering their stock, and it is woven into a very coarse and heavy cloth for tents, and for sacks in which grain and many other articles are transported.³⁸³

Without fences and other restrictions to prevent roaming, herdsmen tended these animals and led them from place to place to graze. Sometimes it was necessary

³⁸² McGarvey, p. 118.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-65.

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to take animals several miles away from the main camp to find enough grazing land. Animals were also allowed to feed in harvested fields; this was an efficient use of any grain missed during harvesting and fertilized the fields, too. Abraham, Lot and Jacob tended their herds and flocks in Canaan (Genesis 13:1-12; Genesis 37:1-17).

Besides grazing land, herds and flocks also need access to an adequate water source. In Canaan, then, wells were extremely important to the success of raising cattle, sheep and goats. The Patriarchs, as nomads, sometimes experienced disputes over water rights with the settled people of the land (Genesis 26:12-22).

While nomadic people did not often sow and harvest grains, settled populations became proficient in harvesting grains, figs and grapes. The primary food of both nomads and settlers was bread. This bread was flat cakes of dough baked on hot stones or in mud-brick ovens. Fruits, nuts, milk and sometimes sheep, goats and cattle comprised the Bible-times' diet. The flocks and herds, however, were often only the source of food on special occasions, such as when entertaining guests. "Honey was used for sweetening because there was no sugar."³⁸⁴

For most people food was simple. Bread, olives, cheese, fruit, and vegetables formed the staple diet. Meat was eaten on rare occasions. Bread was so basic a food that it became synonymous with life itself.³⁸⁵

Crops in Canaan were usually coaxed from hillside terraces, due to the hilly and mountainous lay of the land. Wheat and barley were the most common grains. "The sowing of grain commences in the fall, as soon as the rains make the soil sufficiently soft for ploughing . . ." ³⁸⁶ Lacking modern farm equipment, oxen pulled

³⁸⁴ Gowers.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ McGarvey, p. 62.

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wooden plows sometimes with a metal blade attached; a plow might be nothing more than a correctly shaped tree limb. Seed was then sown by hand and tamped by foot or the tread of the oxen. Harvesting was accomplished by using a sickle (Joel 3:13) to cut the grain, stalk included. Taken to a threshing floor, it was next either trampled by oxen (Deuteronomy 25:4) or beat with instruments (2 Samuel 24:22) to separate the grain from the stalks. Then winnowing forks were used to throw the stalks into the air, whereupon the wind blew the stalks or chaff aside as the grain fell back to the earth. Raked, sifted through screens to rid the grain of debris (called sieving) and put in containers, later women ground the grain into flour. In Palestine, the harvest is not in danger of being hampered by rain as it is in America and elsewhere.

Better suited to terrace farming than grains, vineyards were especially productive in Canaan and contributed greatly to ancient diets. Grapes, raisins and juice were prominent food and drink. Grape juice was also condensed and later reconstituted with water for beverages. Vineyards, however, required much work; stone hedges or fences had to be constructed to discourage stray animals, grazing herds and flocks from eating the vines and fruit. Towers were also constructed to guard the vineyards. Vats for juice and grape preparation and storage required much labor, being carved out of the rock hillsides.

They consist of two vats dug in the surface of the natural rock, one large and shallow, in which the grapes were trodden by the naked feet of men, and the other deeper, narrower, and lower down the slope, into which the juice was drawn from the crushed berries above. The upper and larger vat is usually from six to eight feet square, and from fifteen to eighteen inches deep; while the lower is

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about half as large but twice as deep.³⁸⁷

Olive trees provided oil for lamps, cooking and personal care. Gathered in baskets from the ground after striking the trees to cause the fruit to fall, olives were crushed in an oil press. It consisted of a revolving stone on top of a larger stone that was carved with sides like a bowl. A hole inside the larger stone drained the resulting olive oil into a cistern for later use.

The olive is a tree of slow growth. It ordinarily bears no berries until it is seven years old, nor does it bear heavily until it is ten, and sometimes fifteen; yet it lives to an extreme old age, probably 500 years, and as long as it has any foliage it bears some fruit. The same tree bears only every other year.³⁸⁸

Fig trees produce a fruit which can either be eaten when harvested or pressed into cakes for future use. “The fruit usually begins to ripen in June, a second crop is gathered in August, and a third when the leaves fall in early autumn.”³⁸⁹

The leaves developed at the end of spring, at the end of April, and were therefore a sign that summer was approaching (Matthew 24:32). Fruit could be found on the tree for about ten months of the year. The first-ripe figs (Hosea 9:10) were ready in June, but the main crop matured in August. There was then a small crop of winter figs that often remained until the spring.³⁹⁰

First Samuel 25:18 provides a picture of a Bible-times’ menu: bread, grape juice (translated wine), sheep, grain, raisins and fig cakes.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Gowers.

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Balsam trees yielded a precious oil referred to in the Bible as “balm.” It was prized for its medicinal qualities (Jeremiah 8:22; 46:11; 51:8). According to tradition, balm was used also to anoint Jewish kings and as an aphrodisiac. Besides Gilead and areas outside Palestine, balsam trees were cultivated in Canaan exclusively at Zoar, Jericho and Ein Gedi. The “thorny, shrub-like trees” were boiled in oil to emancipate the trees own oil, which was bottled and marketed. “Related strains of balsam trees are still cultivated in the southern Arabian peninsula and Somalia, where the oil is used as an antidote to snake bites and scorpion stings.”³⁹¹ A balm factory is reputed to have been unearthed at Ein Gedi.

Walking, of course, is the first means of travel throughout the world. In Palestine of long ago, pack animals like the donkey and camel were used, sometimes to pull carts or wagons.

The asses of Palestine are smaller and of better shape than those used for breeding purposes in America. They are usually about 3½ feet high, lightly built . . . and legs as neat and trim as those of a deer. They are quick and easy in their movements, and are capable of carrying immense burdens. . . . usually handled by women and small boys. . . . The owner usually gives the donkey a stall or resting-place about the humble dwelling almost as comfortable as his own, and sometimes a corner of his own room. . . . A camel of good size and condition will carry a burden of 800 pounds. . . . These packages are usually made tall enough, as the camel kneels between them, to be strapped on him without being lifted. . . . about three miles an hours. . . . The surprising capacity of the

³⁹¹ Jack Meinhardt, “Balm of Gilead,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 22, No. 5, September-October 1996, p. 19.

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camel for traveling a long time without water — often six or seven days — is well known. His ability to live on the most innutritious food is equally surprising. He will not reject feed of barley or of any delicacy that would be prized by a pampered horse, yet he will cheerfully feed on the leaves of the dryest weeds; and the thistles, which his master carefully avoids touching lest their needles pierce through clothing and shoes, he will wipe greedily into his mouth with his long under-lip, and roll as a sweet morsel under his tongue. . . . The camel-driver usually walks in front of his train of loaded animals, leading the foremost of the line by a halter, while the halters of the others are hitched each to the saddle of the one before him.³⁹²

“Known as the ‘ship of the desert’ because of their rugged versatility, a camel could carry a cargo of 500 pounds up to 100 miles a day.”³⁹³

Oxen were also used, especially to pull loaded wagons of grain or freight. Chariots were used by some government officials and wealthy individuals (Acts 8:26-40).

Obviously, legal codes varied from community to community and from nation to nation. Frequently, only residents were protected by legal rights; immigrants or nomads often were legally defenseless, or at least largely unaware of local laws. However, hospitality was an area in which many ancient peoples exercised themselves nearly alike. Hospitality was neither offered nor accepted lightly. Once hospitality was extended and accepted, certain legal, moral and cultural responsibilities were incurred by both parties. Armed conflicts were forbidden during periods of hospitality and for specified periods

³⁹² McGarvey, pp. 56-59.

³⁹³ Jackson, *Bible Background Study*,, p. 29.

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following. Though this often only involved individuals it sometimes affected larger groups, such as peoples as well. Further, the host became responsible for the well being and protection of his guests regardless of cost or danger (Genesis 19:1-8).

The oldest male held absolute power over his family unit. He was the law to those subordinate to him while he was himself responsible to the community law. However, should he commit a sin grievous enough or threatening the safety of the entire community, his household could suffer the consequences of his sin, too (Joshua 7:24-25). Community law was administered through the elders of the village; this group represented the collective group of heads of households in the community. It was their charge to manage the affairs and legal cases affecting the entire village. Such business was transacted at the city gate (Proverbs 31:23).

Land was so precious to the Jews that they seldom sold it outside the family. Before land could be sold to a non-family member, it had to be offered for sale to the next eligible male in the family (Jeremiah 32:7-14). If he did not wish to purchase it, another male in the same family was permitted to buy it (Ruth 4:1-10).

Though largely foreign to western customs, fasting was very much a part of ancient people in the Bible lands.

Though there was but one **fast** demanded by the OT law, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:31; cf. Isa. 58:3), fasting was a common custom among the Jews. Fasting was practiced during times of mourning (II Sam. 1:12), crisis (II Sam. 12: 16; Neh. 1:4), penitence (Jonah 3:5), and in connection with significant religious events (cf. Ex. 34:28). Christ recognized a value in fasting (Matt. 4:2; Luke 5:35), as did the primitive saints (cf. Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23; II Cor. 6:5; 11:27). There is doubtless some benefit to this practice, but it is a voluntary act arising from

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the heart. The Jews of Jesus' day, however, had made an "art" of fasting for the sake of attracting attention, a thing which Christ strongly condemned (Matt. 6:16-18). The Mishna detailed the Jewish traditions regarding fasting. The congregation would fast if there was invasion from an enemy, crop failure, drought, etc., and such fasts were conducted on Mondays and Thursdays of a designated period. Extremist Jews, however, would fast **every** week on these days, and in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, Christ takes note of this fact (cf. Luke 18:12).³⁹⁴

Fasting has no religious prominence under Christianity, for it is not instituted as a worship practice in the New Testament (e.g., communion, giving, praying, singing, preaching). Fasting is not something, for instance, that can be accomplished in the short duration of a worship assembly; fasting sometimes continues over a number of days (Acts 9:9). Individual, voluntary fasting, however, is acknowledged in 1 Corinthians 7:5. Some contemporary religious groups may endeavor to practice fasting as a religious ordinance, though, without divine authority from Scripture. Lent is a modified fasting with some ascetic overtones.

Ancient marriages were usually arranged between the oldest male family members within the same group or family clan (Genesis 27:46-28:2). This guaranteed the future existence of the overall group and preservation of culture and values. Girls were given in marriage when they were old enough to bear children, whereas men married when they either received their inheritance or obtained their own resources. It was also common for the groom to give a dowry, or purchase his wife from his future father-in-law. In the case of Jacob, since he

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

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evidently had no such dowry, he indentured himself to his father-in-law in exchange for his wives (Genesis 29:15-21).

During the first century, however, it appears to have been the general rule that young people who were “of age” could arrange their own marriages. A girl was considered of age at twelve years and one day. The Jewish rabbis set the minimum age for marriage at twelve years for the girl, and thirteen years for the boy. A boy should certainly be wed by the time he was eighteen to twenty. Betrothal was a vital part of marriage in biblical times. Once a young man had chosen his prospective bride, and she had consented (if of age), a formal declaration of marital intent was made in the presence of two witnesses. The couple was then betrothed. The betrothal period was fixed by law. For a maiden, it was from ten months to a year; for a widow, three months. From the time of her betrothal until the marriage actually took place, a woman was treated **as if she were actually married**. The betrothal could not be dissolved except by divorce; breach of faithfulness was regarded as adultery.³⁹⁵

When the day for the marriage arrives, the bridegroom with some of his friends goes to the house of the father-in-law, and receives the bride. She is brought with much parade to the bridegroom’s home, where a feast is prepared, of which the guests partake with a great deal of boisterous merriment.³⁹⁶

Judaism prohibited marriage between Israelites and

³⁹⁵ Jackson, *Bible Background Study*, p. 80.

³⁹⁶ McGarvey, p. 111.

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non-Israelites (Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Ezra 10:10-14). One purpose of this prohibition was to segregate God's people from heathens who would lead them into idolatry. Another reason for restricting these marriages was to preserve the family tree of Abraham until Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah could be fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

Nomads, such as the Patriarchs, sometimes buried their dead along their route of travel (Genesis 35:19-20). Otherwise, natural caves or rock-carved tombs were often used as family burial sites (Genesis 23:1-20), especially by the wealthy. These rock tombs were used to bury several family members (Genesis 49:33—50:13). This custom of burying the dead was practiced in the time of Christ (Matthew 27:58-60). Personal possessions were interred with the dead to indicate who the person was in life.

It was the custom of the ancient Jews, Syrians, and Phoenicians to bury articles of value, such as jewelry, weapons, and lamps with the dead; and when the land fell into the hands of a strange people, void of respect for the dead of a hated race, the robbery began.³⁹⁷

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 (Matthew 27:1-10). "The poorest Jerusalemites, who could not afford family cave-tombs, were buried in fields, about a foot below the surface."³⁹⁸ Most burial sites were outside cities; only the very rich could afford the price of scarce city property for tombs. Rock tombs carved in solid rock, sealed with heavy, round slabs in gardens and dating to the first century still

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

³⁹⁸ Boaz Zissu, "Odd Tomb Out," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 25, No. 2, March-April 1999, p. 52.

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exist in Jerusalem.³⁹⁹

. . . in the sepulchres of the Jews bodies were usually buried . . . without a coffin of any kind. . . . A mass of rock was found . . . without seams through which water could find its way, and with an exposed side already perpendicular, or easily made so. Into the face of this perpendicular side of the rock a doorway was cut, usually about two feet wide and three feet high, intended to admit one person at a time in a stooping posture. After chiseling this opening twelve or eighteen inches into the rock, a square chamber was chiseled out, never less than eight feet square and sometimes twenty feet square and eight feet high. This chamber was not the burial-place, but a room around which the actual graves were dug. These last were niches like pigeon-holes cut into the sides of the chamber, of the right size to receive a man feet foremost, and long enough to receive his entire body. They are usually about twenty inches wide and twenty-five or twenty-six high. There are usually three of these on a side, and they are cut with their floors nearly on a level with the floor of the chamber. Sometimes a second tier of niches was made above the first, with about a foot of rock between. When a body was placed in one of these niches, a stone slab cut the right size and shape was fitted to the mouth of it with cement around its edges, so that the odors of decomposition would be confined and not allowed to infect the central chamber. A similar stone was fitted to the outer door of the chamber or else the door was closed by a

³⁹⁹ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 63.

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large round stone like a millstone, which could be rolled to the right or left when admittance was sought . . .⁴⁰⁰

A third type of interment, little used, is often ascribed to the Essenes. About 1,200 graves at Qumran as well as some graves at Jerusalem and a couple other locations are vertical shafts in the ground. These shafts are four to six feet deep with one or more shelves carved in the side of the shafts. There are several particulars in which these tombs differ from ordinary burial of Jewish dead historically.

- The shaft graves are the graves of individuals [with rare exception], while family tombs are the norm in Jerusalem.
- The shaft graves were used for primary, rather than secondary, burials. In family tombs in Jerusalem, by contrast, about a year after the primary burial the bones of the deceased were placed in an ossuary for a second burial.
- The shaft graves are unadorned, whereas the many monumental Jerusalem tombs are highly carved and decorated on both the outside and inside; indeed, several of the family tombs were designed to resemble imposing mansions. The shaft graves also differ from the shallow field graves for the poorest Jerusalemites.
- The shaft graves are anonymous; in most of the Jerusalem tombs, however, the name of the deceased is carved on the ossuary (which is usually highly decorated).

⁴⁰⁰ McGarvey, pp. 127-128.

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- The shaft graves at Beit Safafa and Qumran contained very few grave goods, whereas the Jerusalem tombs were rich with jewelry, vessels and ossuaries.⁴⁰¹

Before burial, a corpse was washed and anointed with spices (Mark 16:1). Next, it was bound in a linen shroud or grave clothes (Matthew 27:59; John 11:44). This was the Jewish practice administered to the crucified Lord (John 19:39-40). Ordinarily, musicians and mourners participated with family members who also grieved for the dead (Matthew 9:23; John 11:31).

In the time of our Lord, Judaism was divided by religious and political factions. Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots were the major groups.

As one begins reading the New Testament, it becomes immediately apparent that there is a curiously different religious situation than that which was characteristic of Old Testament history. For instance, as the OT concludes, there is mention of neither synagogues, Pharisees, Sadducees, etc., yet during the period of Christ's life on earth, the synagogue was a dominant feature of Hebrew religion, and daily life literally rang with clashes of the Jewish sects. The question naturally arises, how came the development of such things? Well, these institutions arose in that era known as the Inter-biblical Period — a span of some four hundred years between the end of the Old Testament and the birth of Jesus Christ.⁴⁰²

The Sadducees were materialists and did not believe in a resurrection from the dead; their religion was a liberal departure from the law of Moses and overshadowed by

⁴⁰¹ Zissu, p. 50-55, 62.

⁴⁰² Jackson, *Background Bible Study*, p. 101.

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politics.

They were the aristocracy of the Jews — rich and powerful. Operating out of the temple, they were the party of the high priesthood.⁴⁰³

They found the world a good place in which to live and were interested in the here-and-now rather than believing in a resurrection, a judgment, or an afterlife. . . . They limited the canon of Scripture to the five books of Moses, which is why Jesus confined himself to those books in refuting their arguments against the resurrection (Matthew 22:23–32). The Sadducees rejected any belief in angels or spirits and followed “common-sense” morality — good and evil, they believed, resulted from personal action.⁴⁰⁴

As a group, neither their sect nor any of their writings have survived to the present. All we know about the Sadducees today is gleaned from their opponents.⁴⁰⁵

With the downfall of the Jewish state, the Sadducees vanished from history. Political leadership was their main function, and when national independence came to an end, so did they. Whereas the Pharisees were not only unaffected by the collapse of political affairs but profited from the new situation to establish themselves as exclusive leaders of the Jewish people, the ground on which the Sadducees were able to exist disappeared from under them.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴⁰⁴ Gowers.

⁴⁰⁵ Flusser, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰⁶ Emil Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, Vol. 1*, T&T Clark, LTD., Edinburgh, 1973, p. 414 as quoted

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The Pharisees were the strictest sect of Judaism, though they added many traditions not taught in God's Word (Matthew 15:1, 9).

They are first mentioned by name in the time of John Hyrcanus (135-105 B.C.). During the earthly ministry of Christ, the Pharisees numbered about 6,000 members.⁴⁰⁷

Their name means "those who separate themselves." There were some six thousand of them at the time of Jesus. . . . The Pharisees developed a set of regulations designed to save people from breaking the law itself. . . .⁴⁰⁸

From New Testament literature, we know much about the prevailing party within Judaism. This group was called the Pharisees. The Scribes and scholars were from the ranks of this well known religious majority who allege that their claims to truth and spiritual authority can be traced back to Moses.⁴⁰⁹

The Essenes are not mentioned in the Bible, but they like the Pharisees believed in the resurrection and heavenly rewards for righteous living. "The Essenes withdrew from the world into communities of their own — about four thousand of them in all."⁴¹⁰

Within the communal establishments of the Essenes, they followed rigorous ritualistic asceticism. Their austere adherence to the Law led their ranks to holy living. They

in *Jewish Sects of the New Testament Era*.

⁴⁰⁷ Jackson, *Background Bible Study*, p. 102.

⁴⁰⁸ Gowers.

⁴⁰⁹ Weiss.

⁴¹⁰ Gowers.

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preferred a celibate lifestyle and were actively involved in ritual bathing. . . . Since most Essene groups frowned on marriage, it was difficult to keep their membership from dying off.⁴¹¹

Zealots were politically motivated to fanatically protest against and resist the Roman occupation of Palestine. Their strong views led to armed conflict against the Romans, which in turn contributed to Rome's decision to destroy the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Before that war with Rome, the assassinations and military activity attributable to the Zealots, from today's perspective, would have made them terrorists or revolutionaries at best.

The Zealots reacted to foreign influence by seeking to destroy the enemy. They believed that only when the Romans were driven from the soil would God redeem his people. The Zealots were founded by Judas of Galilee in AD 6. The Zealots held that paying taxes to the Roman Empire was treason against God.⁴¹²

It is interesting to note that one of the Lord's apostles, Simon, had been a Zealot (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Is it not a marvel that Christ could bring together, in the same apostolic band, men like Matthew, the tax collector, and Simon, the non-tax-payer?⁴¹³

The Sanhedrin was a Jewish council of 71 religious leaders. Included in that number and serving as the chairman was the high priest. Other members included prominent priests, scribes, elders and other leaders (Mark

⁴¹¹ Weiss.

⁴¹² Gowers.

⁴¹³ Jackson, *Background Bible Study*, p. 105.

Chapter 12: Customs of the Biblical World

15:1; Luke 19:47). The various divisions within Judaism were represented in this group including the Sadducees and Pharisees (Acts 23:6). The Sanhedrin was the highest religious authority in the time of Christ, as well as the highest Jewish civil and political authority under Roman occupation. However, they lacked the power to exact the death penalty under prevailing Roman control of Palestine (Mark 14:64; 15:1; Acts 13:27-28; 25:1-19).

Weapons in ancient times ranged from primitive wooden implements such as farm tools, clubs and spears (Judges 3:31) to iron or bronze military weapons. The three primary weapons became the spear, bow and sling. Later, the Jews adopted chariots and used horses as well in battle.

The fact that a greater abundance of iron has not been found seems to indicate that it was not widely used in early times, but another contributing factor may be that iron oxidizes more quickly and completely than copper, and, having disintegrated, would not be as readily detected in excavating.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹⁴ Free and Vos, p. 37.

Chapter 13: Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls

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.⁴¹⁵

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 Qumran still present some mysteries for which no theory adequately and

⁴¹⁵ Hershel Shanks and others, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: After Forty Years*, Washington, D.C., Biblical Archaeology Society, c. 1992, p. 4.

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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.⁴¹⁶

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

⁴¹⁶ Hershel Shanks, “Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 21, No. 2, March-April 1995, p. 12.

Chapter 13: Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls

our English translations were made.⁴¹⁷

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.⁴¹⁸

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.”⁴¹⁹

The claims, then, that *new 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 this 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

⁴¹⁷ Free and Vos, p. 176.

⁴¹⁸ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 40.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

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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.).⁴²⁰

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.⁴²¹

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

⁴²⁰ Free and Vos, *op. cit.*

⁴²¹ *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.*

Chapter 13: Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls

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.⁴²²

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.⁴²³

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

In Mount Gerizim, under the entrance of the upper pit: one chest and . . . 60 talents of silver . . . In the vat of the olive press, in its western side, a plug stone of 2 cubits: 300

⁴²² Mike Fillon, “Searching for the Treasures of the Bible,” *Popular Mechanics*, Red Oak, IA, Vol. 176, No. 5, May 1999, pp. 73-74.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

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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. . . .⁴²⁴

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.”⁴²⁵

Excavation of the site yielded ink pots, 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.⁴²⁶

Several additional buildings and large cisterns also comprise the ruins of Qumran. “[I]n July and August it gets to 135 to 140 here.”⁴²⁷

Qumran was destroyed by the Romans along with other Jewish cities, including Jerusalem, following the

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

⁴²⁵ Weiss.

⁴²⁶ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 38.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

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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. Besides scrolls containing biblical text, secular scrolls, including 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.⁴²⁸

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 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.⁴²⁹

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 than [sic] the Dead Sea Scrolls.”⁴³⁰ Finds like this, dating to 2,700 years ago, help

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

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verify the date of Bible books claimed 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.⁴³¹

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

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

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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.⁴³²

The Temple Scroll was confiscated by the Israeli military from an antiquities dealer following the 1967 Six-Day War. Prior to 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 following the confiscation of the scroll.⁴³³

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

⁴³² Yitzhak Magen, "Ancient Israel's Stone Age: Purity in Second Temple Times," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 24, No. 5, September-October 1998, p. 46-52.

⁴³³ Hershel shanks, "Magnificent Obsession," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 22, No. 3, May-June 1996, p. 35.

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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.”⁴³⁴

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.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁴ Humble, *Archaeology and the Bible*, pp. 50-51.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

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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)
Mercy (Titus 3:5)

Grace (Eph. 2:8)
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)
Baptism (1 Pet. 3:21)
Purity (Rev. 22:14)
Love (1 John 2:10)
Works (Jam. 2:24)

Repentance (Acts 17:30)
Obedience (Heb. 5:8, 9)
Faithfulness (Rev. 2:10)
Hope (Rom. 8:24)
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.

About the Author

Louis Rushmore, a former Catholic, obeyed the Gospel in 1972 while in the United States Air Force. One year later (evening services on pot-luck Sunday), he preached his first sermon. After several months of preaching for various congregations by appointment, Louis accepted his first fulltime work in 1974.



Presently, brother Rushmore is an evangelist, laboring to help continue the missionary and literary work of the late J.C. Choate. Louis and his wife, Bonnie, are coworkers with Betty Choate (and others stateside and overseas). 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 Corinthians*, *2 Corinthians* and *James*. He has been the Editor of *Gospel Gazette Online* since 1999, and brother Rushmore is an Associate Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* magazine (which goes into 80 countries). Additional experience includes Gospel meetings and lecture-ships, and radio, plus limited television.

About the Book

Biblical Companions is a comprehensive overview of biblical history. Expect to become better acquainted with the geography of the Bible in association with biblical events, Bible characters, places, ancient customs and Scripture. Come to know better the most important first century cities to early Christianity. Learn about the true significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Note that there are plentiful external evidences to bolster Christian faith and complement the Word of God. The extensive index provides for swiftly turning to specific areas of interest. *Biblical Companions* has been used for years in preacher training.

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